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## Solzhenitsyn 1918 - 2008

David Warren

Prophetic writers are a holy nuisance to everyone, but especially to themselves. The gift of prophecy renders a man incapable of a quiet life, incapable of enjoying idle pleasures, incapable of looking the other way – when it is to no immediate personal advantage to be staring at the truth. But it cannot take away the normal human desire for such comforts.

Nobody could have wished to be Alexander Solzhenitsyn, poet of the Gulag, and of its “zeks” (hapless prisoners). Providence



compelled him to experience at first hand everything he would immortalize, from the prison camps to the terminal wards to betrayals of every magnitude and kind. And to these it added something more cruel: moments in which victories were achieved against improbable odds, each one soon overturned.

Yet providence also instilled the strength to resist illusion, and few men have endured what Solzhenitsyn repeatedly endured, more stoically. From the moment of his first arrest in 1945, he ceased to entertain the illusion that

Communism could reform itself; and later the illusion that after the final collapse of Communism, the Russian people would emerge in any other condition than they did: scarred and debilitated by their experience of enslavement, and by their complicity in the machinations of evil.

Solzhenitsyn was, as all great writers, of an experiencing nature, able to assimilate what he had not lived to what he had lived. It took him little time, once exiled to Europe then America, to see through the illusions of the post-Christian

West, and to describe – knowingly and exactly – the spiritual emptiness of our purposeless freedom. The Russians had had materialist servility imposed on them by a monstrous regime; we were meanwhile imposing it on ourselves – in the flaccid consumerism of the “mall culture,” and by our deafness to every noble calling.

Much of his long masterpiece, *The Gulag Archipelago*, paradoxically depicts the triumph of the human spirit under terrible  
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## Cuba under Raúl: Creeping toward capitalism?

Sara Miller Llana &amp; Matthew Clark

Havana – A handful of Cubans are taking turns doing bicep curls and pedaling on stationary bikes. At first glance, there's nothing extraordinary about this nameless gym in the basement of a Havana apartment complex.

Yet when night falls, the machines – crafted out of wood planks and scavenged metal tubing – disappear like a government informant into the shadows. They are disassembled and tucked away to make room for the coughing Russian Ladas and '50s-era American cars that fill the building's parking lot.

Officially, this fly-by-day gym does not exist, but Guillermo Arrastia opened it five years ago. He employs a staff of three and collects monthly \$5 fees from more than 100 members. It is run completely “por la izquierda” – “on the left” – a term that describes how most Cubans make ends meet. “We have to survive,” says Mr. Arrastia, unapologetically.

Such gray-market microenterprises exemplify a spirit of dynamism and creativity straining to be fully

unleashed, say some observers of Cuba. The question of the day: Is Raúl Castro about to release it?

The island nation's economy has struggled mightily since losing the support of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Free-market reforms within a socialist system, like the kind embraced by China, had been rejected by Fidel Castro, who ruled for a half century. But there are signs that younger brother Raúl, who permanently replaced Fidel in February, may orchestrate a move toward a more capitalist economy.

Raúl's reputation as a pragmatist is unfurling expectations here that the era of asceticism and austerity is coming to a close. Major agricultural reforms have been unveiled. And in a speech earlier this month, he seemed to be preparing the populace for an economic shift.

“Socialism means social justice and equality, but equality of rights, of opportunities, not of income,” Raúl said on July 11 while addressing Cuba's rubber-stamp parliament in its first session since he replaced Fidel. “Equality is not egalitarianism.”



Paladares are one of the few private businesses in Cuba. The owners turn a section of their homes into a restaurant and pays a monthly license fee to the government. Like private homes turned into hotels, the license fee is a flat rate and does not reflect the amount of business the owners made.

It's hard to imagine the father of the 1959 revolution ever uttering such words, say Cuba analysts. And a recent

flurry of headline-grabbing changes – such as allowing Cubans to patronize tourist hotels and to own cellphones,

DVD players, and computers – is fueling speculation about how fast Raúl  
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## News

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will pursue the "China model" of a managed creep toward free markets.

"Cuba is never going to go as far as the Chinese have in dismantling the social safety net," says William LeoGrande, a Cuba expert at American University in Washington. But he says that Raúl has already exhibited an expediency that Fidel never dared: acknowledging under-the-table wages, raising salaries and enticing productivity with payment, and, most important, he says, introducing market incentives in the farming sector that could be the starting gun for reforms in other sectors.

"To some extent, they are experimenting to see how additional market mechanisms work out economically and to see the political ramifications," he says. "I think there are a lot more changes coming."

After the Soviet Union collapsed — and Cuba lost generous oil supplies and subsidies that had buoyed the economy for decades — a "special period" of economic hardship ensued. In this context, Fidel grudgingly loosened the economy, giving rise to a new crop of tailors, mechanics, and restaurateurs. The government created about 150 categories of licenses for Cubans to start their own businesses, and the ranks of self-employed swelled to 200,000.

Today that number has fallen to 150,000, says Antonio Jorge, a retired economics professor from Florida International University who also worked as a finance official in the early years of Fidel's reign. Fidel began to discourage such businesses the late 1990s, saying that they were creating economic inequality, says Mr. Jorge. A gap was growing between entrepreneurial haves and state-employed have-nots.

In response, the government stopped issuing new licenses for 40 categories of businesses (including restaurants) in 2004, jacked up taxes, and created other limits on income growth, such as reducing the number of tables permitted at paladares — private restaurants that Cubans are allowed to run out of their homes.

Jorge says that Fidel wouldn't allow anything that detracted from absolute central government control. But, he says, that Raúl could, for example, boost the number of categories of small businesses and be more liberal in the granting of licenses, or remove some of the barriers such as high taxes. "These are measures that won't affect his hold on power or change the collectivist nature of the regime, but will improve standards of living for some people," says Jorge.

But for now, the burdens Fidel imposed have merely pushed entrepreneurial activity underground.

Ani, a 20-something Cuban woman — who like most Cubans interviewed for this series withheld her last name — has opted out of the state jobs system, one that she once idealistically embraced, she says.

She was trained as a teacher in her home province Pinar del Rio, and moved to Havana to teach junior high students. But after a few years of making 200 pesos (\$9) a month, she quit. "The [pay for the] job was not worth it," she says.

Now she has no official job, aside from



Guillermo Arrastia runs a clandestine gym in the garage of his apartment building. He spoke to the residents and all agreed that it would be a good idea. He designed and built most of the machines. Members, mostly from the neighborhood, pay a monthly fee. Mr. Arrastia uses part of his income to make improvements to the building, and thus keeping residents from alerting the authorities.

helping her aunt rent out a room to foreign tourists, an illegal but far more lucrative venture. When asked about the loss of her contribution to society as an educator, she shrugs: "This is how it works here. What we don't have we invent."

### Everything is 'on the left'

It takes no more than a half day with Jorge Aviles to see that nearly everyone in his Havana neighborhood, and in his sphere of activities, operates "on the left."

There is the neighbor who rents out her empty apartment to foreign tourists — even though by law to rent a room in your house you must live there. There is another who sells pizzas out her side window at night.

As Mr. Aviles walks down the street, he gets "business" proposals, ranging from risky to innocuous. On a recent day, he bumps into an old friend and is offered a year's supply of soap bars for \$75. He counters by offering the spare room he sometimes rents by the hour to couples. The friend replies that he and his girlfriend have recently gotten their own place. How about an installment plan of \$25 a year for three years, he asks. Aviles passes.

"Everything here is about selling and negotiating, and it's all illegal," says Aviles, who insists on using a pseudonym since he is on the government's radar after being fined in November for renting his room to foreign tourists without authorization.

He questions why endeavors that would be considered entrepreneurial and encouraged in most countries are outside the law here.

Back at his underground gym, Arrastia also knows he faces a fine if he is found out.

After he lost his computer sales job and hit on the idea of a gym in the parking lot, he sought a government license for his gym. But he found out that the business category doesn't exist. So he consulted his building's neighborhood association, which approved of his plans. Today he pays the association about \$12 a month to keep quiet about the arrangement. He knows he is at the mercy of any disgruntled neighbor, but he also says that such endeavors will be legalized and that his tiny exercise room with about 25 homemade machines will be the template for a much bigger business some day.

"I do believe this will be authorized," says Arrastia. "I want to have another much bigger gym, legally.... I will grow this business and have gyms all over Havana."

### Farm reform on fast track

How soon, if ever, urban Cubans like Arrastia will get the opportunity to legally run small businesses isn't clear. But Cubans in the countryside may already be on a faster track to change. Agricultural reforms could radically transform the island's economy: Last week, Raúl granted private farmers the right to till plots of up to 99 acres of unused government land. This follows a previous announcement to shift control of farms from the central government in Havana to local councils, raise prices for certain products to boost production, and give farmers the right to use whatever farm equipment they can afford to buy.

Almost immediately upon taking power 50 years ago, Fidel Castro began nationalizing the telecommunications industry and expropriating farm lands. Less than a decade later almost all businesses were in state hands. In exchange, Cubans were given subsidized food, free healthcare, and homes. The economy never functioned independently, and it has never quite recovered from the fall of the Soviet Union.

Cuba now relies heavily on Venezuela, whose leftist President Hugo Chávez sends nearly 100,000 barrels of oil a day to the island in exchange for social services, such as Cuban doctors and teachers. Even though Raúl promises not to veer from the ideals of the revolution, he has publicly acknowledged that the system does not work in its current form.

The moves to increase crop production are, in part, a response to a global spike in fuel and food prices, which has made the subsidized food system — once regarded as one of the major successes of the revolution — untenable for many ordinary Cubans today. "We're [in deep trouble]," whispers a man, using an expletive, while exiting a state-run produce market in Havana. He says he could not afford to buy anything to supplement the monthly ration of rice, beans, potatoes, eggs, a little meat, and other goods. Many Cubans say the ration does not last them more than three weeks, if that.

In his most recent speech to parliament, Raúl implored his countrymen to work harder

and prepare for tough times ahead as the global food crisis ripples toward Cuba. "We have to definitively reverse the decline in the amount of cultivated land," he said, adding that it has shrunk by 33 percent in the past nine years. "Stated simply, we must return to the land. We must make it produce. There is already a clear strategy and a plan of action, from the national level to the lowest level of production."

Currently more than half of arable land lies fallow or is under used, according to Cuban government figures cited by The Associated Press. Cuba spent \$1.5 billion importing food last year. This year it is expected to spend \$1 billion more, say officials.

"There's been a recognition by Raúl that the government cannot run farms as well as [private] firms can," says John Parke Wright, a wealthy rancher and sixth-generation Floridian whose ancestors were instrumental in cementing trade ties between Tampa and Havana in the 1800s. Mr. Wright and other longtime observers say that market experiments on farms are just a stepping stone to a more open economy.

### Texan cattle and cotton

But while some Cubans blame their economic woes on strict controls and prohibitive taxes, many still view the US and its 1962 trade embargo as the bigger culprit. No matter how much Raúl seeks to open the economy, the embargo will stand in the way of much-needed foreign investment, analysts say.

If the economy is opened up, the tourist industry will explode. But it is on the farms and fields of Cuba where a change is most likely — and there is no shortage of investors eyeing potential changes. On May 27, a group of trade representatives from Texas wrapped up the first official state visit to the island since the US established the embargo.

"Cubans expressed a sincere desire to do business with Texas," says Texas agriculture commissioner Todd Staples, who led the delegation. Cuba is an important market for Texan cattle, rice, poultry, cotton, and processed food products that enter under provisions in the US embargo that allow small amounts of trade in agricultural products.

"We just went to develop relationships, but the trip exceeded our expectations," says Mr. Staples. Members of the delegation signed two new cotton contracts worth \$400,000 and initiated several other contracts for poultry, milk, and processed foods. "Positive trade relationships can lead to greater understanding of the issues that divide us," he says.

Such goodwill may not be the status quo in either nation right now, but the sense that change is coming certainly is. "The social values we espouse mean nothing if there is no economic basis," says Renel, a young lawyer in Havana. "Whether it is socialism, communism, capitalism, even feudalism, things are going to change."

Squatting to fix one of his broken-down stationary exercise bikes, Arrastia agrees: "In the future, the economy will open up. It has to. The people have a limit."

Sara Miller Llana and Matthew Clark are staff writers of The Christian Science Monitor



## Politics



## An American empire? Part 1

Is America an empire? The short answer to this is yes. The long answer to this is yes, but . . .

Four decades ago, George Parkin Grant saw Canada's local traditions being swallowed up in the homogenizing forces of technology emanating from the "American empire." More recently, especially in response to George W. Bush's foreign and defence policies, a number of observers have been employing the same expression. How accurate is it?

Definitions of empire vary, and the Oxford English Dictionary definition of "supreme and wide political dominion" is not that illuminating. Imperialism usually has connotations of expansion of territory at the expense of one's neighbours. Economic or cultural imperialism has been used in some circles to signify the overarching influence of a single country or group of countries on especially the world's poorer regions.

In the 19th century the United States expanded its territory westwards as its people settled beyond the Appalachians and the Mississippi River. In 1867 it acquired Alaska from Russia and, at the end of the century, annexed Hawaii, Puerto Rico and the Philippines. Nevertheless, American self-perceptions contain a pronounced anti-imperial component, as indicated by former Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld's implausible statement that "We're not imperialistic. We never have been."

Of course, it has been many decades since the United States was in the business of annexing territories outright.

Yet no one can deny that its influence in a variety of areas is global in reach. American popular music is heard around the world. American military forces are stationed in many countries, most notably Afghanistan and Iraq. The subprime mortgage crisis in the US is inexorably having its impact elsewhere, including Canada. And English is the world's *lingua franca*, the language of commerce, international relations and the academy, propelled in large measure by the phenomenal power of the US.

The negatives of empire are easy to spot. Territorial empires tend to exploit the periphery to benefit the centre. The residents of the non-metropolitan territories lack the full rights of citizens in the mother country. For example, though my father was born a British subject in colonial Cyprus, he could not vote in British elections unless he were to have moved to the United Kingdom proper. Worst of all, the western colonial empires were based on a general belief in the superiority of the colonizing races over their subject peoples.

The American empire has been subject to many of these same defects, including a naïve belief in the universality of American political institutions. Canadians are only too well aware that US policies are inevitably made in their own interest, often to the detriment of other countries. When harnessed to the overwhelming might of the world's only superpower, both political realism, with its focus on power for its own sake, and idealism, with its ambition to do good, can run roughshod over the legitimate interests of less powerful nations. The principal victim is justice itself.

At the end of the Second World War, the European colonial powers, having just defeated an especially vicious form of imperialism at home, began to divest themselves of their colonies in Africa, Asia and elsewhere. Britain gave up the jewel in its crown, India. France eventually let Algeria go, but only with great reluctance. The Netherlands vacated Indonesia. And the US even gave up the Philippines.

Yet empire is by no means dead. Though there is much to be said for the view that America is an empire, there is another, less negative side to this, which I will take up next month.

David T. Koyzis teaches political science at Redeemer University College, Ancaster, Ontario, where he is now teaching a second generation of political science students.



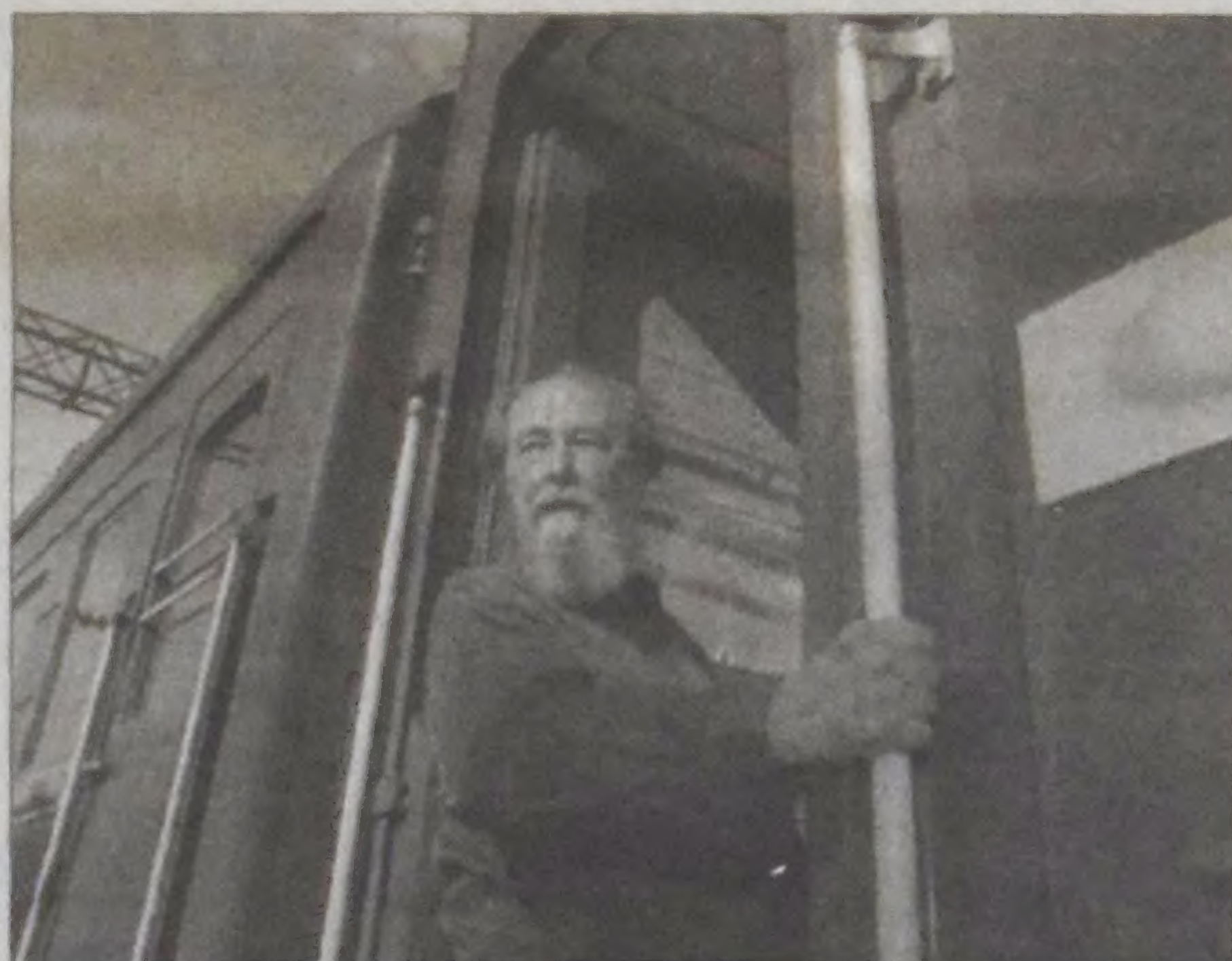
### Solzhenitsyn continued from page 1

oppression, and is carried along by an inspiring lyricism. There is drollness and humour throughout, and the stark presentation of life among the zeks has developed, from the skeletal sketches of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, into the flesh of a magnificent painting. There is a profound overriding conceit: the Gulag as metaphor of "the prison of this world," that reminds one of the *Divine Comedy*. We plunge into the torments of a hell on earth, but having descended, we then find ourselves constantly rising. The tone of the book is as far removed from bitterness as the subject can allow, and there is real charity in depictions of the camp weasels, the guards, and petty bureaucrats – caught up with the prisoners in a mysterious human solidarity.

It is possible that the *Red Wheel* cycle of novels is greater still, but if so, this is lost on me. Later novels of the series have yet to be translated into English, and the volumes I have seen, which appeared in the 1980s, were different in kind from what I had come to expect. Solzhenitsyn in these books seems to become almost an historian of ideas. The books have been dismissed in the West as "polemical," but their author is no more "writing an op-ed" on the Russian Revolution than he was in the Gulag Archipelago. He seems instead to be taking up from Dostoyevsky, showing the reasoning of, initially, fairly decent men, as they progress through idealistic revolutionary whimsy, to terrible crimes in power – but with an empathy beyond Dostoyevsky's.

Behind Solzhenitsyn the prophet we find Solzhenitsyn the human being, imaginatively projected into the lives of his characters, and unwilling to reduce them to caricatures. Tolstoy I suspect (reading no Russian) was less willing to give an enemy the benefit of the doubt; and Solzhenitsyn makes us appreciate what is human even in a Lenin.

He was not a polemicist: he really was a literary composer, in the grand tradition of the realistic novel.



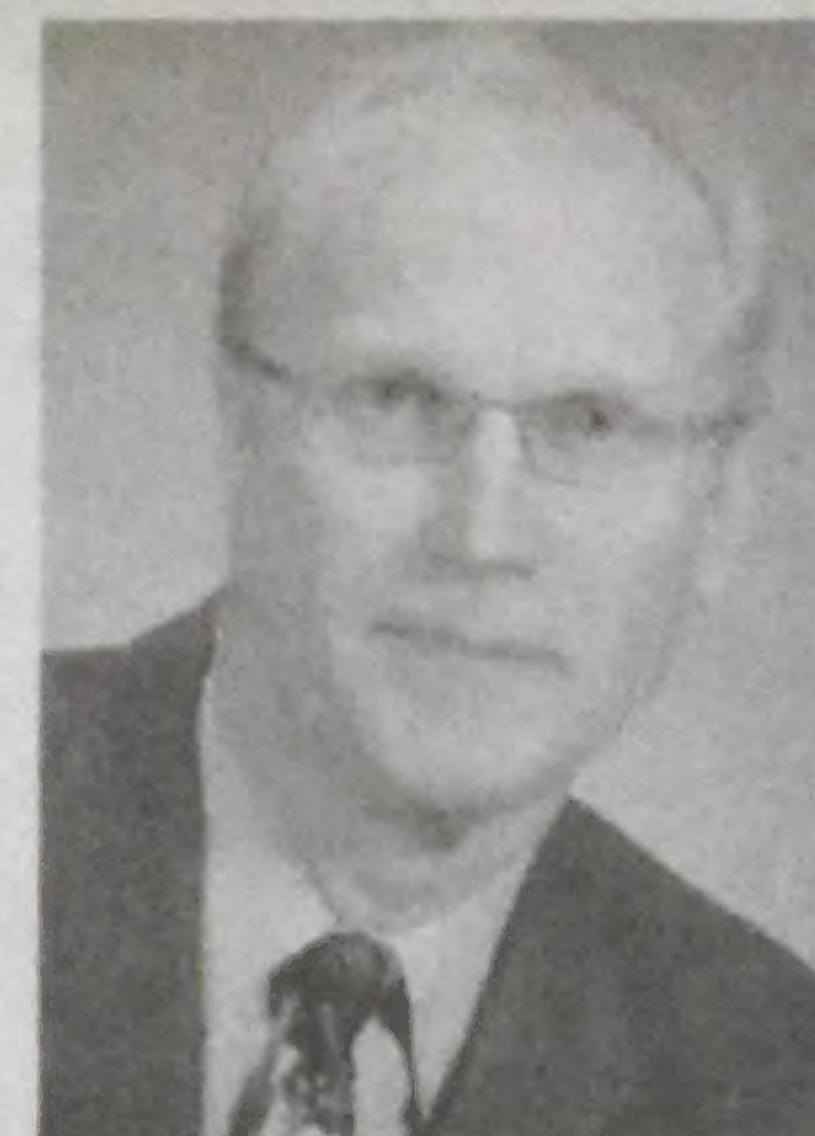
Russian writer and Nobel prize winner Alexander Solzhenitsyn looks out from a train, in Vladivostok, summer of 1994, before departing on a journey across Russia. He had returned to Russia after nearly 20 years in exile. He died near Moscow at the age of 89 on August 3, 2008.

His memorable speeches – from his Nobel Lecture to his Harvard Address in the 1970s, which every educated person read – were themselves less polemical than their author's reputation. Solzhenitsyn is not at ease writing prescriptions for the world's ills. There is unconcealed naivete – a prophetic naivete – when he tells us, repeatedly, that simply by telling the truth, and facing the truth, our devils may be routed. When he does offer to analyze political realities in political terms, he sounds narrow and mean. He did try to play the politician sometimes, especially towards the end of his life, and those efforts were quite forgettable.

His voice and his books have shared in the eclipse of the Evil Empire; we think of him now as a figure from a past epoch. But in another generation I think Solzhenitsyn will be returned to, and his prophetic qualities better understood. For Solzhenitsyn had the gift to place human events on a stage larger than human life.

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## Editorial

# From wooden shoes to cowboy boots

Harry der Nederlanden

When I arrived in Canada with my family, although I was barely 6 years old, I already had an inkling of what it would take to become a Canadian, that is, a manly man. I had an agenda. The first thing to which I applied myself was comic books – cowboy comics, of course. To be a real man in Canada, I figured, you had to be a cowboy, or at least have the heart of a cowboy. I was at a bit of a disadvantage with other boys my age. They regularly got to see the Saturday movies. T.V. had not yet arrived in our neck of the woods, so what I had to learn about being a man in big sky country bordering Edmonton, Alberta, had to come from comic books.

What about teachers and preachers? All the teachers I had to grade 6 were women, and they considered it their duty to suppress and even extirpate the cowboy in us males. All the preachers I heard spoke with a thick Dutch accent and seemed more at home in little rooms than in the wide open spaces of the foothills. No, comic books were my best bet.

Some things I quickly learned from my favorite cowboy heroes were these: cowboys spent very little time with cows but quite a bit of time in saloons; they never backed down when insulted or confronted; they had to be quick on the draw; above all, they had to be fearless – or at least show no fear.

The first discovery delighted me. Cows, I'd learned from a few visits to local farms, are not pleasant company. Being a cowboy sans cows (and sans flies) was much more appealing. In fact, the best kind of cowboy to be was a lawman: you got to live in town and sleep in a real bed most of the time.

One of the first items on the agenda, of course, was to acquire the look of a cowboy. You couldn't be a cowboy without a cowboy hat. I tried one of those straw sombreros that you could buy for a buck at Army and Navy's at the time, but that didn't really do it. A sombrero made you look like a Mexican peasant. The felt hat I ended up with was a bit droopy in the brim, but that was alright. It gave me a bit of a dangerous

look, I thought. And it did me good duty almost every day (winters excepted) during my apprenticeship years. A vest, blue jeans and rubber boots with their tops rolled down a few inches and the outfit was complete.

Except for the hardware, of course. Getting the hardware right was the hardest part. My first gun and holster set was soon tossed into the back of the closet as inadequate. The holster trapped the gun so firmly that when I practiced my quick draw, the holster would come up with the gun and twist it out of my hand.

Then one day, there it was – the most beautiful gun and holster set I'd ever seen. It was a perfect replica of a Colt six-shooter. The cylinder came out just like in a real gun and after packing the bullets with small round caps you inserted them one at a time in the cylinder. The hammer would come down on the shell and – POW! – smoke would belch out of the barrel just like in the movies. (Okay, I confess I did sneak off to go see a few cowboy movies on Saturday. I was babysitting a neighborhood kid and his mother gave me the money.)

Although the holster was made of genuine leather, it didn't quite measure up to my exacting standards. After a little cutting and restitching, however, it was the best fast-draw holster in the town of Beverly. After a few weeks of practice, I was as fast as Wyatt Earp. I could stand in front of one of my buddies who already had his six-gun out and draw and fire at the same time he did. They marveled at my speed, and promptly began carving away at their holsters. But I was the fastest gun in the neighborhood.

As I sat one day gloating over my he-manly accomplishment, however, it dawned on me that when we both fired at the same time, we'd both be dead. In the comic books the good guy always let the bad guy make the first move. I wondered how old the average six-gun hero got to be.

Some evenings after dark I'd stalk around at night like the town marshal doing his rounds. In the comics his keen senses would warn him just in time that a bad man was lurking in ambush – the jingle of a spur, the creak of the boardwalk, the click of a pistol hammer – and he'd whirl, draw and fire into the darkness. Thump! – another bad man bit the dust.

After enacting that scenario a few times, my Calvinistic upbringing began to kick in. With the darkness teeming with evil men determined to cut short the heroic life of the lawman, I couldn't see how his career would last more than a few months at best, no matter how keen his senses and how fast his draw. And being fearless might not work to his advantage. Chances were great, too, that with all that shooting at shadows, he'd nick a few innocent shopkeepers.

As I flipped through my comics again, I began to realize that the life of the hero depended more on the relative scarcity of back-shooting badmen than on his fearlessness and skill with a gun.

My comic-book lessons weren't wholly useless, however. I did discover that controlling your fear and refusing to back down did make life easier. When faced with a gang of half-a-dozen guys threatening to take your papers or magazines, every cell in your body tells

you to turn tail. But my comic books taught me to stand up and push back. Instead of running away, I'd step forward straight for the guy with the biggest mouth and tell him in vivid terms what would happen to him if he touched my papers. Maybe I was lucky, but I always picked out a guy that backed down. And then the others in his gang would focus on him instead and rag on him for being a chicken. By acting fearless I didn't even have to fight. Well, not very often anyway. It did mean that I got into a few fights that I knew I couldn't win. By the time I got to high school, I'd learned that almost all fights could be avoided.

The Bible talks a lot about fear and not fearing. Most of the entries in the concordance are about fearing God, but many others are quite concrete: they tell us not to fear enemies and the setbacks life can bring. One of the Psalms even exhorts us not to be afraid on the battlefield because though others may fall on either side of us, we will be safe. Some of our favorite stories illustrate the fearlessness of faith. David goes up against Goliath with his slingshot and Gideon goes up against a powerful army with his handful of men selected by divine lottery. In the New Testament, Jesus scolds his disciples when they show fear because their boat is about to sink in a storm.

What connection, if any, is there between the fearlessness of my comic book heroes and the biblical variety? Does the command "fear not" speak to a boy faced with bullies? Was I merely acting out of a macho cowboy ethic when I stood up for myself and my friends when it would have perhaps saved me a black eye if I'd run?

We come to the other side: fearlessness as foolishness. Anyone who doesn't turn and run when faced with a charging bear isn't brave and fearless but foolish. And life is full of charging bears. Are we to suppress our fears when earthquakes, floods, financial disaster, horrific disease and violence threaten to overwhelm us? Surely God permits us these natural fears!

My parents were deeply faithful people to the end, but as Alzheimer's crept up on them like a thief, stealing more and more of their faculties, there were times when they were seized by deep fears. As death draws nearer to me, I tell myself that I really do not fear death as such, but I'd be a liar if I said I didn't fear the pain and suffering that may come before. A painful, lingering end is one of the nightmares that haunts us in our technological culture. Nevertheless, I pray for the fortitude to face that time with courage.

Faith does not lift those fears from our shoulders. It does not turn us into cowboys who can face all threats with equanimity. Faith does, however, I believe, put all those fears on a different level. I may trust that the Lord will give me the wherewithal so that fear does not totally overwhelm me and define me. He will give me the courage to stand up to the devil even in the darkest hour knowing that fear will not lead me to despair because God has infused his Spirit of comfort and hope into my backbone.

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## News

# "ERCB hearings on Petro-Canada Upgrader demands that we reconsider the meaning of life"

John Heimstra

Petro-Canada is proposing a \$14.1 billion bitumen upgrader be built on high-quality agricultural land in Sturgeon County, north-east of Edmonton. The Energy Resources Conservation Board (ERCB) is conducting public hearings in Fort Saskatchewan to decide whether, and under what conditions, this project should proceed.

In recent years, the ERCB and its predecessor the Energy and Utilities Board has come under critical fire. Alberta's booming economy, spurred by massive oil sands developments, is placing immense pressure on our economic, social, educational, and health infrastructure; on agricultural land and rural communities; and on our natural and ecological heritage.

The ERCB is an independent, quasi-

judicial agency mandated by government to decide whether new energy developments are in the "public interest." The Petro-Canada Upgrader hearings, however, suggest that ERCB deliberations tend to be focused on narrow, technical, and instrumental concerns.

## Moved to submit

Two events motivated me to present at these ERCB hearing.

First, my recent sabbatical research on the oil sands found that these enormous developments reveal a great deal about who we think we are as humans, what is truly important in life, and where we think our culture ought to go.

Second, reading a feature article on Wayne



Groot, a potato farmer directly impacted by this upgrader, also deeply stirred me ("The climatic costs of rapid growth," *Globe and Mail*, Feb. 1, 2008). His subsequent testimony to the ERCB revealed his family's anguish and heart-break as they lose neighbours, face the potential loss of their family farm, witness the destruction of surrounding farm land, and experience the decline of Sturgeon County ecology.

## A flawed public interest mandate

One reason is that the 'Act' requires ERCB to decide the public interest in this case but provides no definition! Nor does the Act offer a framework in which to consider broader concerns.

Past ERCB rulings have tended to define the "public interest" narrowly as "economic interests." At other times, it is defined as a kind of mechanical balance between multiple private interests.

As a consequence, the ERCB has found every application for oil sands related projects since 1996 to be in the public interest.

This is clearly a troubling outcome. Especially in view of the explosive growth and massive impacts of the oil sands projects, including, open pit mines, SAGD operations, pipelines, upgraders, refineries, and associated infrastructure. The \$14 billion Petro-Canada upgrader is, notably, only a part of this bigger phenomena.

## A narrow, fragmented approach to science

A more fundamental reason for the ERCB's narrow, technical focus lies with the "modernist view of science" that it shares

See *Hearings* on page 7

## Interim director of Christian Reformed Home Missions

July 25, 2008 – The Christian Reformed Church in North America on Friday announced that Ben Vandezande will take over this fall as interim director of Christian Reformed Home Missions.

Vandezande currently serves as Home Missions regional team leader for Eastern Canada. He will replace John Rozeboom, who has been director of CRHM for 22 years.

"It is with great joy and profound thankfulness to our God who supplies all our needs that I announce that Ben Vandezande has accepted the job as interim director of Home Missions," says Mary Buteyn, CRHM board president.

In his current position, Vandezande oversees CRHM work in Ontario, Manitoba, Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island. Effective on Oct. 1, he will serve as interim director of for two years.



"I hope my service and leadership as interim director can be helpful at this time of transition in Home Missions' journey," Vandezande says. "I want to help Home Missions make a good transition to

new leadership and discover creative ways for regional ministry teams together with others to walk with churches / ministries to embrace God's mission in a fresh way."

Vandezande says that he will assume the job at a strategic time in the denomination. "I hope we can discover fresh ways to partner together as agencies/institutions of the CRC as we serve churches, leaders, and ministries and encourage them to embrace the mission God has given to each of them to carry out

in their own context."

"Ben is highly respected as a strategic planner, a great coach and a good listener who turns listening into action," says Sandy Johnson, director of denominational ministries for the CRC. "His passion for the local church and in their ability to transform lives and communities makes him a great candidate for this role."

Before coming to Home Missions, Vandezande was director of Diaconal Ministries Eastern Canada (now Diaconal Ministries Canada). He has also worked as a development coordinator, a municipal politician, and an educator.

"Ben Vandezande's acceptance of Home Missions' interim director position is more satisfying than I can express," says Rozeboom.

The new interim director, says Rozeboom, is a man who possesses "God's deep experience and mission passion to Home Missions and CRC leadership" and that this is "wrapped in as much love of God and teammates as one person can display."

The Christian Reformed Church is a Protestant denomination with about 275,000 members in more than 1,000 congregations across the United States and Canada, working to create and sustain healthy churches and to express the good news of God's kingdom that transforms lives and communities worldwide. To learn more visit [www.crcna.org](http://www.crcna.org).

Christian Reformed Home Missions is an agency of the Christian Reformed Church in North America. It partners with congregations and regions to encourage church planting, help churches become more mission-focused, support educational ministries, train leaders and promote spiritual growth. To learn more visit [www.crhm.org](http://www.crhm.org).

## Problems with the ERCB

Before presenting my submission, I listened to several days of submissions and arguments. Clearly, the ERCB faces a difficult and daunting task.

It is fair to say, that almost everyone at the hearings is concerned about the deeper questions of life arising from this proposal – including ERCB members and employees, local land owners and interveners, and Petro-Canada employees.

But ironically, these questions were simply not the focus of the proceedings. Over and over again, presentations and cross-examinations gravitated to narrow, technical, and instrumental issues.

The ERCB seems to miss the forest as it focuses on the trees. Why?

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## Politics

# Rick Warren to interview McCain, Obama

*Q & A format will give an hour to each*

Marian Van Til

LAKE FOREST, Calif. — Megachurch pastor Rick Warren has done what no journalist has yet been able to do. He has gotten both major U.S. presidential candidates, senators Barack Obama and John McCain, to agree to participate in a two-hour question-and-answer forum at his Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, California, on August 16.

Warren became widely known via his book *The Purpose-Driven Life* and subsequent speaking engagements. Warren says he will ask questions of the candidates for one hour each — separately. “My plan is to bring them out on stage together at the beginning or at the end,” Warren told CNN’s Wolf Blitzer. “But what I want to do is I want to let each of them talk without interrupting each other. And it’s not a debate format.”

Warren explained his decision. “There will be plenty of time

for debates. What I want to do is get people to know the real person like I know them without a time barrier and a buzzer and a time for rebuttal. Let them just speak what they need to say.”

Warren knows each senator personally. “They have both different theories of government, different theories of leadership, different approaches to life,” Warren says. “And I — what I do is I think, because I know them, I think I can set up an environment that people can actually say, oh, so that’s what that guy’s really like.” Topics to be discussed may include poverty, AIDS, human rights and the climate.

The event is slated as a part of the Saddleback Church’s



Rev. Rick Warren, who fought for tax breaks for clergy members, conducts an afternoon service at Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif.

“Civil Forum on Leadership and Compassion.” The forum will also host an interfaith meeting between Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders to discuss projects they can work on together.

## The Fannie-Freddie bail out

James W. Skillen

In the face of continuing economic stresses, most of them tied in one way or another to housing-finance difficulties, Congress and the Treasury department worked hard for weeks to come up with a complex bill to guarantee the mortgage creditworthiness of two government-sponsored enterprises (GSEs) popularly known as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. President Bush, who earlier threatened to veto the bill, signed it into law on Wednesday.

The new law’s central purpose is to forestall a collapse of the two GSEs, which are the largest holders of US home mortgages. They currently guarantee about \$5 trillion worth of mortgages. Given the serious decline in home values over the last year, investments in the two GSEs have declined. Under ordinary market conditions, they could easily go bankrupt. If that happened, the US would experience a financial crisis of immense proportions.

The immensity of the problem may be difficult for us non-economists to grasp. If the federal government literally had to take on that full debt burden, it would add \$5 trillion to its already immense \$9-plus trillion debt. Hoping nothing that terrible will happen, Congress and the president nonetheless anticipated growing federal indebtedness and raised the federal debt limit to \$10.6 trillion.

If that were not enough, we need to recognize that a huge amount of the investment in Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac is from foreigners, whose money (and confidence) our economy needs to keep going. On Tuesday it was reported that the Russians, who had \$100 billion invested in Fannie

and Freddie at the start of the year have since reduced that investment by half (Financial Times, 7/29/08). In other words, the combination of declining home values and home sales with the withdrawal of investments in the two GSEs threatens a monumental disaster.

Something had to be done, of course, but given the intricacy of economic dynamics, we should not be overly critical if our government’s response in this case is inadequate or even mistaken.

The debate among professional economists shows that this “necessary” bail out is not very satisfying on principled grounds. On the one hand, there are the Kudlow & Company folks who strongly object to the government’s interference in the marketplace. Government cannot fix this problem, they argue, and should leave it to market forces. The bail out is just another example of government overreach.

Critics on the other side say it was government’s failure to adequately regulate Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac in the first place that led to this crisis. What the government is now doing is simply placing the burden of market and regulatory failures on the backs of its citizens who will have to foot the bill. That is unjust. As Lawrence Summers puts it, the government allowed private investors to take the profits when things were going well and now it is socializing the losses (Financial Times, 7/28/08).

To my untrained eye, the situation looks like this. Americans believe so much in the free market that we approve of government keeping its hands off as long as the economy is growing and we are experiencing personal gains. But when things go bad, our only recourse is to government’s emergency action to try to keep the market from collapsing. We, the public, then become the bail-out team for the market’s investors who must be assured of a profit so they’ll stick with us. The pattern is as Summers describes it.

What we need instead is for government to focus on upholding justice for the entire Republic rather than to gamble with debt-accumulating economic stimuli to try to promote growth. Public justice requires adequate regulation of all market functions that could jeopardize society when the economy falters. Private investment failures should fall on investors and insurers, not on taxpayers who are dragged in after private losses threaten public stability.

James W. Skillen, President, Center for Public Justice

## Croatia limits Sunday shopping



A cathedral in Zagreb, Croatia

ZAGREB, Croatia (LifeSiteNews) — The parliament of the predominantly Catholic country of Croatia is urging its citizens to reclaim Sunday as a day for celebrating the Eucharist, for family, and for rest.

On July 15 the Croatian parliament passed a law requiring most businesses to close on Sundays. The law does, however, allow Sunday shopping during the summer tourist season and Christmas holidays. It also allows stores in hospitals as well as those in gas, bus and train stations to open on Sundays year-round. Bakeries, newsstands and flower shops are also exempt from the ban.

Most post-communist countries, including Croatia, have experienced problems transitioning from the oppression of Marxist ideology, which proclaimed there is no God and therefore no need for any day for religious observance or rest, to a free market economy with a fascination with and craving for all things Western.

Croatia, however, is now in a more stable political and economic situation in which its people can reaffirm their centuries-old traditions of family and faith and experience a Renaissance of their culture. The banning of Sunday shopping is a significant step in that direction.

The benefits of not making Sunday just an extension of Saturday have been well documented. A report entitled “The Church vs. the Mall: What Happens When Religion Faces Increased Secular Competition?” that was published by the National Bureau of Economic Research in 2006, indicated that approval of Sunday shopping triggered an increase in drug and alcohol use among otherwise faithful churchgoers.





## Stewardship



Shell's Scotford refinery, a new heavy oil upgrader east of Fort Saskatchewan, will be one of many multi-million dollar upgrading projects in the Edmonton area. Canadian Natural Resources Ltd. is also looking at putting an oilsands upgrader in the region.

### Hearings continued from page 5

Together, we seem to be captivated by a view of science that assumes all reliable expert knowledge is produced by splitting up the phenomena we study into smaller and smaller pieces. Thus, natural and social science splits life up into disciplinary, sub-disciplinary, and smaller units.

The modernist approach further incorrectly assumes, that resulting knowledge-fragments will automatically cohere into a larger, unified body of knowledge that accurately reflects, and even predicts, reality.

In the ERCB hearings, we see this view of science produces a strong confidence in scientific data, technical expertise, professional credentials, and so on. And, significantly, this type of knowledge is an important input into the ERCB's public interest decisions.

### Paradox of experts

But this view of science also produces a troubling "paradox of experts," Lawrence Busch observes: "Those who claim to be experts are laypersons in other fields, due to the sheer volume of scientific and technical information." Experts in one discipline "look with incomprehension" at the findings of other fields [*The Eclipse of Morality*].

Since narrow expertise dominates the ERCB process, no one is really able to speak expertly to the larger questions of life, e.g. what is human wellbeing, ecological stewardship, happiness, and how should economics fit into this picture.

### Technical adjustment solutions

Since fragmented knowledge doesn't magically re-unite on its own, furthermore, we end up using it in isolated ways. Companies, regulators, and even the ERCB use knowledge-fragments to define problems in isolation and then to produce technical adjustment solutions.

The problem with this type of solution

is that it simply adjusts problems at the margins without asking whether the overall development, or even the entire society, needs re-orientating solutions. This is why the ERCB must begin to incorporate deliberation on the larger questions of life.

### The big picture slips in the backdoor

We would be mistaken, however, to think these larger questions are unanswered by the ERCB. In fact, it imports them from mainstream society which implicitly answers them with its faith in progress.

This Enlightenment faith holds, in essence, that humans can comprehensively understand nature through science and then technologically use this knowledge to master and exploit nature. It further believes that this results in continuous economic growth which increases material prosperity and ultimately guarantees human happiness. This faith in progress lurks in the background of many debates over the tar sands.

If life consists in accumulating more and more things, therefore, then the ERCB should conclude that the public interest requires rapid development of the oil sands and approval of the Petro-Canada upgrader.

But do we still believe this? I don't know. This is why we need broader ERCB deliberations!

Perhaps society is starting to believe that happiness depends on the quality of our relationships, the integrity of creation, justice in our communities, and the equal ability of all to flourish.

If so, the ERCB would need to arrive at a different view of the public interest. It should then place a moratorium on the Petro-Canada upgrader. It should further request the Alberta government provide it with a broader public interest framework to use in all future deliberations.

*This column is based on Dr. John Hiemstra's submission to the Petro-Canada Oil Sands Inc. (PCOSI) Sturgeon Upgrader proceedings. He is Professor of Political Studies at the King's University College, Edmonton, and can be contacted at:*

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## Reflections on Stewardship

Rick DeGraaf

## Impact investments

A popular sales pitch for investments is "Make your money work for you". Many mutual fund and investment advertisers try to sell you the dream of having an investment portfolio large enough so that you can live off the interest earned. Sure we would all love to be completely financially self-sufficient in this life – especially when it comes to our retirement. The question we all have to wrestle with as we approach retirement is: 'How much will be enough?'

In an earlier column on this topic, I focused on lessons from Jesus' parable of the Rich Fool (Matt. 12:13-21) and warned about investment strategies that hoard too much of this world's resources for selfish ends whilst neglecting to provide for God's kingdom work and neglecting to honour God's important enabling role in all that we do. We ought to be good stewards of all that God entrusts to us, yet our stewardship must not become the security on which we put our primary hope. I like to bear in mind the saying: 'More faith in the Creator than the created.' When we are wise stewards with all that God entrusts us, we actually have more resources that provide not only for our needs (keeping our 'wants' reasonable) but also enables us to be generous for God's Kingdom work. In other words we are blessed by God to be a blessing.

Sometimes, I believe our focus is too much on the return of our investments in terms of monetary gain only. There are other criteria that I believe are much more important for a Christian steward. Some really important questions to be answered are: "What is my money doing as it works for me through my investments? Do I know how my investment portfolio earns its interest? Do I know exactly what my money is doing in someone else's hands to make a monetary gain for me? What is the impact of my investment in moral, ethical, and environmental terms?"

Rather than focusing on maximum monetary gain, I would ask all of us to consider investing in Christian institutions and agencies (Universities, Schools, Nursing homes, CSS, CRC Extension Fund, etc.) many of which advertise in the back of this paper. Sure the returns might not be as great as are possible with more speculative and therefore riskier investments, but the returns are reasonable and safer. Consider, however, the double impact your money has when it not only works for you but it also works for a Christian ministry or institution that furthers some aspect of God's Kingdom work? For instance, why should the secular banks fund our new church addition or renovation when investments from our own Christian community could be doing it?

Paying off all debt, establishing an emergency savings fund and retaining funds for retirement are responsible things a good steward should do. In setting this up a good steward can invest these savings so that aspects of Kingdom work can benefit and therefore have a double impact! That's what I call impact investing!

**Stewardly tip: Christian Investment Counselors** can help you make impact investments.

Find someone who shares your Christian values. Each of the Christian institutions and agencies advertising in this paper also have staff that can help you understand what investing with them will do. I invite you to contact us at CSS. We can also provide impartial professional advice as we represent over 40 Christian Charities.

**Readers:** Share your 'Stewardly tips' so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Debt crazy?

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## Church

## Evangelical Fellowship calls Canada's attention to increased persecution in China

Marian Van Til, with files from EFC

OTTAWA — On the eve of the Olympics in Beijing, the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada (EFC) has called the Canadian government's attention to China's infringements of religious liberty, curtailments that affect not only the Olympic athletes but Christians in China.

In a letter to Secretary of State Helena Guergis and Minister of International Trade David L. Emerson, the EFC's Don Hutchinson urged the government "to continue to engage the Chinese government on its human rights record relating to freedom of religion."

Hutchinson is the EFC's director of law and public policy and chair of its Religious Liberty Commission. He told the government secretary and minister that the EFC "is deeply concerned about China's continuing infringements on religious liberty."

### 'We'll pick your spiritual advisors for you'

Hutchinson explained: "Olympic athletes, including Canadian athletes traveling to China to compete in the Games, have been barred from bringing their own spiritual advisors with their teams. Traditionally, every competing country has been allowed to bring spiritual advisors to the Olympic Games for the benefit of team members. Instead, China has said that it will provide Chinese spiritual advisors to each national team. Not only could this pose problems for the athletes on a cultural and language level, but it demonstrates the

Chinese government's ongoing suspicion of world religions and religious leaders."

Hutchinson further pointed out that the teams' spiritual advisors have, in the past, been selected "because they have the confidence of the team members and national Olympic team officials, which will be lacking in those approved and provided by the Communist Party of China." He noted that China's decision could have an adverse effect on the spiritual health of the athletes. Ultimately, Hutchinson wrote, the decision "is a reflection of the continued ongoing reluctance of China's acceptance of true freedom of religion."

### Persecution worse, not better

Hutchinson also expressed the EFC's deep concern for China's own religious community, "particularly the underground Protestant Christian community." He said the EFC's Religious Liberty Commission "recently released a report on the persecution trends faced by Chinese Christians in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. Despite promising human rights improvements, our research reveals that religious persecution has increased in advance of the Games."

Open Doors and Voice of the Martyrs, each of which are ministries that focus on persecuted Christians worldwide, have confirmed that persecution has increased in China in the last few years, despite China's promise when applying to host the Olympics that it would improve its human rights record.

## China house church leader homeless after meeting U.S. Congressional delegation

BEIJING, CHINA (BosNewsLife)— One of China's most respected house church leaders remained homeless Sunday, July 20, with his wife after authorities expelled them from their home in the Chinese capital Beijing for meeting earlier in July with an American Congressional delegation, officials and a rights group said.

Pastor Bike Zhang, chair of the umbrella Federation House Church and his wife, Xie Fenglan, were reportedly forced to leave their home in Beijing's Chaoyang District by officials of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) one of China's main law enforcement agencies.

The couple was initially able to find shelter in the home of a friend, but officials found out and forced them to move into a nearby hotel, said religious rights group China Aid Association (CAA), which supports the two Christians. On July 14 the owner of the hotel in Beijing's Tongzhou District, was ordered by PSB officers to expel the couple.

While trying to seek shelter elsewhere they were stopped by police who took them to a police station and "interrogated them on a one on one basis without food,

drink, or rest," said the well-informed CAA in a statement to BosNewsLife. Xie Fenglan finally collapsed the next morning at around 6:00 local time, but was taken to hospital only five hours later, CAA said.

### Forced to the streets

The couple later tried to find shelter in another hotel, but were again forced to leave by PSB officers, the group explained. Zhang begged PSB officials to allow his sick wife to stay in the location and rest overnight. The officials rejected this plea and forced Zhang to send his wife to her sister's residence in the city of Sanhe, outside Beijing, for recovery, CAA said, adding that Zhang found residence in a local hotel.

"On July 16, while going out to buy medicine for his wife, local police officials followed Zhang and forced his wife to move out from her sister's home," CAA said. "Both Zhang and his wife are now forced to live on the streets and are not able to find shelter."

When asked why the couple was being expelled from Beijing, officials reportedly responded: "Because Bike Zhang met the Americans," a reference to an American Congressional delegation which recently visited China. With that contact Zhang "destroyed the harmony of the Beijing Olympic Games," according to Chinese officials.



## Catholic World Youth Day has positive impact on Australia

SYDNEY, Australia (ZENIT)

— After Pope Benedict XVI left Sydney after World Youth Day in mid-July, Australian Cardinal George Pell said in a press conference that the event gave the Catholic church a new standing in the public sphere in Australia. Regarding life issues, for instance, the cardinal contended that the public will be more ready to realize "that we Catholics have something to say on those subjects and will potentially give us a respectful hearing. This World Youth Day has demonstrated that the great majority of Australians are quite open to what we have to say."

Pell continued, "They might disagree with us but they recognize us as being in the mainstream of Australian life; that religious considerations are important; people need meaning and purpose; and that overwhelmingly, people recognize the necessity of being open to the transcendent. In the past, we Catholics might have been too interested just in ourselves. Now we are saying very clearly we have something to offer to the rest of the Australian population."

Auxiliary Bishop Julian Porteous of Sydney reflected on the reverence the young people showed during the week. He suggested one of the highlights of World Youth Day was something that received relatively little attention: the morning catechism sessions. These sessions, which ran Tuesday through Saturday, brought prelates and youth together for teaching, questions-and-answers and Mass. "All the bishops noted how responsive the young people were in the catechesis situations..." Bishop Porteous said. "We feel that there's a new depth of church experience for young people that's already springing out, which gives us great hope for the fruitfulness." Porteous asserted that the Sydney event proved once again that World Youth Days every three years "really have a capacity to effectively engage at a pastoral and spiritual level with young people."

### Congress members protest

In a related development, some 18 American Republican Congressional members signed a petition for the release of prisoners detained by the Chinese government for "religious crimes." Some of the prisoners have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms for their alleged crimes against society.

The delegation directly addressed the Chinese Ambassador to the U.S., Zhou Wenzhong, and charged the Chinese government of "directly violating the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights," CAA said. Article 18 of that Declaration says: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or



### Too theological?

Bishop Porteous, who is the director of Sydney's Good Shepherd Seminary, told ZENIT the story of a young man who approached him to say the Pope's homily had had a deep impact on him. "I noticed some criticism from the secular reports about the Pope's homily being 'too theological,' [saying that it] risked being lost on the youth," said Porteous. "But this young person was adamant that perhaps the journalists weren't in tune as much with what the Pope had to say because they were listening to it with different ears."

An 18-year-old from the University of Florida echoed that. "I thought he was encouraging and his message was very relevant to the struggles the youth of today have," said Christine Lally.

Not everyone was happy with the event, predictably. Some said the Pope's apology to victims of abuse by priests didn't go far enough. Others complained that an local ordinance intended to prevent causing "annoyance" to Youth Day attendees curtailed the rights of citizens, and a court ruled that they were right. But on the whole, those citizens were impressed with the gathering. And New South Wales Police Commissioner Andrew Scipione said that statistically, Sydney's crime rate during the gathering was the lowest it's been in a long time. He attributed that to the presence of the young Christians and a general "sense of spirituality" in the air. He told Sky News that extra police forces on hand seemed almost unnecessary, since the young people were well-mannered and well-behaved.

Pope Benedict has announced that the next World Youth Day will be hosted by Madrid, Spain, in 2011.

private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance."

The letter mentioned several Christian prisoners including Alimujiang Yimiti, Pastor Lou Yuanqi, Wusiman Yiming, Shi Weihai, Pastor Dong Yutao Pastor Li Shentang and 20 other prominent house church leaders, including Pastor Wang Weiliang, Pastor Shen Zhuke, Feng Guangliang Pastor Zhang Rongliang, Pastor Zhang Geming, Pastor Sun Qingwen, Daniel and Eliza Ng, Pastor Hua Huiqi, Shuang Shuying, Peng Ming and Gao Zhisheng.

The Congressional members asserted that China's hosting of the Olympic Games is "a privilege and honor for any country and is a show of human dignity as well as a display of world unanimity." Both concepts, they stressed, "have been grossly ignored by China."



## Church

## Reformed gathering in Africa calls for stand against 'world disorder' caused by 'rich minority'

PRETORIA, South Africa (WARC) – A rich minority is working to dispossess the poor, creating food and fuel price increases as well as chaos and corruption, a group of 25 Reformed theologians and church leaders from Africa asserted in a consultation earlier this year held in Pretoria.

African church leaders gathered to consider ways to continue to promote the Accra Confession. The Accra Confession is the major statement of the 24th general council of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) held in Accra, Ghana, in 2004. It states that working to create a more just economy is essential to the integrity of the Christian faith.

"We looked through the eyes of the powerless and suffering people and reflected on what this means for us. We located ourselves among the poor and downtrodden and this determined our theological viewpoints and our faith and humanity as we read the Bible together. We stand against this world disorder, rightly identified by the Accra Confession," the African church leaders stated in a communiqué.

The consultation was sponsored by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches and its African regional body, the Alliance of Reformed Churches in Africa (ARCA), to continue to plan strategically how to engage African churches on the Accra Confession.

"We believe the integrity of our faith is at stake if we remain silent or refuse to act in the face of the current system of neoliberal economic globalization," the Accra Confession states.

The Pretoria consultation said that Christians need to challenge the "survival of the fittest" thesis of today's principalities and powers – the powerful, the empire, the market – which purport to have the only truth.

### Debilitated by European colonial empires'

"The universal church is only now recognizing and taking into account the fact that the wealth creation capacity of Africa is debilitated by European colonial empires through the domination and exploitation of African peoples, the humanity and natural resources.

"This is a history and a faith question that cannot be denied," the consultation stated.

"We observed that the convergence of domination and exploitation is manifest in the collusion of the exploitative market system, which colludes with other life-denying systems of injustice, such as racism, sexism, ecological degradation and the abuse of human dignity," the church leaders added. "We stand against this world disorder, rightly identified by the Accra Confession, because in today's globalized world the new law is the 'law of the jungle' or 'survival of the fittest,' which we reject."

The consultation brought together women and men, theologians and church leaders, from east, west, central and southern Africa. A keynote address was given by Allan Boesak, a former WARC president, who said that the church must be on the side of the poor because that is where God is. Puleng LenkaBula, Africa consultant for the Covenanting for Justice Project of WARC,



told the gathering that the faces of poverty in the world are largely black and women.

A nine-member Africa Covenanting for Justice Working Group was appointed to continue work on the Accra Confession throughout Africa.

Participants agreed to introduce the Accra Confession to the national Christian councils and Reformed churches in Africa to stimulate debate. In addition, a study guide will be created for churches and curricula will be developed for theological and Christian education programs with feedback from these studies to be made available for a 2009 consultation.

Since the 2004 Accra General Council, churches, theological seminaries and partner organizations have been studying the Accra Confession and responding in various ways. WARC and ARCA have begun a process of gathering information from churches and partners on how they are living out the Accra Confession and how WARC can support them.

LenkaBula has developed a questionnaire which was sent to all WARC's Africa member churches earlier this year and she is drafting a study guide for African churches.

Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth, executive secretary for WARC's Office for Church Renewal, Justice and Partnership, called the Africa consultation significant. "It provided the context for key inputs for the covenanting for justice process, especially regarding race and power analysis. It also made clear the urgency for more proactive responses by churches, including engagement in the public arena. African churches see this as a critical life issue that calls for unity and action."

A revised ecumenical charter adopted in 2006 by the Christian Reformed Church in North has, according to that charter's introduction, made the CRC "less insistent than she once was that our ecumenical partners understand Christian, or even Reformed, truth in the same way as the CRC" and has allowed the CRC to become a member of WARC.

## Growth of Christ-believers in Israel the strongest since Jesus walked the earth

YAD-HASHMONA, Israel (ANS) – "In Israel, a resurgence in the number of Jews who believe in Jesus is getting a lot of attention. Many leaders say it's the strongest growth since Jesus walked the earth, and that the Messianic movement could be on the brink of a great revival," reported Wendy Griffith recently in a television story for The 700 Club (CBN).

"This is the first time we've seen Israeli society in general being so open to considering who Yeshua is," Messianic leader Asher Intrater told Griffith. "This is a real miracle, and there's beginning to be grace and favor with us in the land."

Although Jesus and the early disciples were, of course, Jews, for most of the history of Christianity most people have seen the gospel as mainly a religion for Gentiles. Even the name Jesus (Yeshua in Hebrew) has been a forbidden word among many Jews. But in the last few years, say Messianic leaders in Israel, something important has been happening.

### Removing the veil

"We are seeing the Lord, the Holy Spirit,

is removing the veil from the eyes of the Jews and more and more Jews are realizing [who Jesus is]," says Tel Aviv pastor Avi Mizrahi.

While some Messianic Jews living in Israel lie low, making an accurate count difficult, it is believed that in Israel there are now about 120 congregations which encompass from 10,000-15,000 Jewish believers. "That may not sound like many, given Israel's nearly six million Jews, but it's a far [different story] than 10 years ago when there were only about 3,500 Jewish believers and 80 congregations," Wendy Griffith reported.

A good example is Shemen Sasson in Jerusalem. Attendance there has almost tripled in the last four years. Today, close to 300 people worship there; most are Jewish or people married to Jews.

Griffith introduced the Ronens to The 700 Club's TV audience: Daniel, Ayelet and their five children. Ayelet is an Israeli Jew and Daniel is a Finnish Gentile whose family has lived in Israel since before its inception as a modern state in 1948.

"For this family being Israeli and believing in Jesus is a natural fit," said Griffith. "They

keep the Jewish feasts, circumcise their sons, keep the Sabbath and serve in the army. And even though they live in a Messianic village (Yad-Hashmona), they don't feel secluded from the rest of Israeli society."

Daniel Ronen explains, "Our kids go with everybody else to school. I go to work outside. Our principle is to go out and be part of society."

### Opportunities to explain the hope within them

The children sometimes face opposition but have learned to use difficult situations to witness to their faith in Jesus. Adan, who is in Grade 3, said, "My friends started to know I'm a believer and they ask me if I'm a believer. I tell them I'm a believer in Yeshua and it's really good to believe in him and that may you can one day believe in him, too."

When the Ronens admit that they believe Jesus is the Messiah and are seen to live their faith they are sometimes accused of being missionaries – a nasty word in Israel. "I think probably the greatest challenge is that you always feel that the rest of society isn't accepting you," said Jackie Santoro, an

American Messianic Jew who now lives in Israel with her husband, Eddie. "And so when you meet somebody and you want to talk to them and you want to tell them who you are, there's always that challenge of: 'Should I say something?'"

On the other hand, for the first time the secular media are saying something, and are beginning to mention Messianic Jews in a more favorable light. A recent wave of persecution, including the bombing of a young Jewish believer, have put Messianic Jews on the front pages of Israel's newspapers. Such events are giving opportunities to Messianic believers to explain who they are, what they believe in, and how they can be Israeli and believe in Jesus at the same time.

"It's really ultimately a battle for the return of the Lord, because Jesus will not return until the Jewish people say 'Baruch h'abba B'shem Adonai' – 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord,'" asserted Karen Davis, a worship leader in a Messianic congregation.

Ayelet Ronen sums it all up. "It is weren't for Yeshua we would all be lost."



## Unions

# Can there be a Christian labour union?

Christian Labour Association of Canada's non-adversarial approach increasingly popular, but misunderstood

Andrew Siebert

The concept of a Christian labour union goes to the heart of all sorts of stereotypes.

Mention "union" and Mennonite in the same sentence, and you could find yourself in uncharted waters. Nowadays, it's definitely less popular than talking about sex.

As evangelicals, Mennonite Brethren businesspeople have traditionally steered clear of the dirty word. One reason is that business is our forte, and not politics – especially anything that smacks of Soviet socialism and the memory it evokes.

Despite the old-school Menno line that deemed unions "separate societies" vying for church attendance, some MBs have begun to see the value in advocating for Christian principles in the workplace in a way that focuses not just on personal piety, but on biblically based justice and conflict resolution between workers and management.

Enter the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC). Since 1952, this union has broken all the stereotypes, and is increasingly popular despite our country's rapid secularization. This popularity is ruffling feathers on both sides. To the Canadian Labour Congress (an affiliation of unions across the country) CLAC is "one of our most serious and pernicious challenges." This is because CLAC rejects an adversarial approach to management relations and is therefore not "in solidarity" with workers against management – one force against another. They're labelled as right-wing ideologues by the left, and a wolf in sheep's clothing by the right.

It's no wonder CLAC's former executive director Ed Grootenboer described the challenge of forming a Christian union as comparable to, "single-handedly tackling the Atlantic Ocean in a rowboat." In a time when there were no Christian social institutions to speak of, a bunch of Dutch Reformed workers decided a power struggle, class-analysis approach to resolving disputes wasn't faithful to their calling. Now they're the fastest growing union in Canada.

Mennonite Economic Development Associate's Wally Kroeker says CLAC is an effort to "do for labour what MEDA does for business." By this he means they try to see work through Christian eyes. In

our day and age, as men and women identify themselves first by "what they do" before talking about their faith, it seems a welcome addition. Now that tight-knit communities have broken down, our primary source of fellowship is often our place of work, not our place of worship.

Mennonites weren't totally out to lunch when they cast a suspicious eye to unions as secret societies. To this day, many union rallies are held on Sundays, highlighting their indifference to religion. However, the consequence was that evangelicals often sided with management in labour disputes simply out of fear of Cold-War socialist infiltrators, crime rackets, and worldliness.

Though unions have garnered headlines for violence and corruption, we owe a great deal to them. If you have a pension plan, a 40-hour workweek, and equal rights as a woman, you can thank these mainline union "revolutionaries." So, what sets CLAC apart?

## Their story

CLAC's founders saw workers as partners with management, not as natural enemies given to suspicion and hatred. They saw workers as part of communities who bear responsibility to each other, their employer, and their work. A "closed shop" practice, which forces all workers of a company to join a union, seemed to wrongfully emphasize collective rights over the individual. To this day, the only place the Supreme Court of Canada denies freedom of association – granted in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms – is the workplace. In contrast, CLAC gives employees the option to join them or not.

Unlike the Canadian Labour Congress, which was a founding partner of the NDP in 1961, CLAC has no political affiliations. They also believe that the "materialistic view of work ... shared by management and unions, is the very opposite of the Christian idea of stewardship, calling, participation, service, and responsibility." They agreed with Pope Leo XIII in his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* – "There is no intermediary more powerful than religion ... in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice."

By advocating a non-adversarial approach, CLAC has consistently been vilified as a "company union," since their goal is to unite interests rather than attack a specific enemy. One in five CLAC locals are voluntary recognition agreements, where management amicably agrees to CLAC's presence without workers having to force the agreement through a legal procedure, which often happens with traditional col-

lective agreements.

For CLAC's 43,000 members, they're a legal advocate and provider of benefits otherwise not available. They provide training in conflict resolution, and always try to form agreements in order to foster teamwork rather than raise ultimatums. Most importantly, they're a third party that is able to foster trust in a dispute.

## Get the benefits

"We talk about work as calling," says Manitoba regional director, Eric Stutzman. "In Christian circles we have this notion of advocacy for the poorest of the poor. Why wouldn't we do that in our workplaces where some people don't have the ability to organize themselves?"

"In situations where employees and employers have a struggle to understand each other, my role provides a level playing field," says Geoff Dueck Thiessen, a CLAC Manitoba representative and MB church member.

A framework for due process is not imposed, he says, but is based on an agreement made by both parties. "The relationship is far beyond a document," he says.

**There is no intermediary more powerful than religion ... in drawing the rich and the working class together, by reminding each of its duties to the other, and especially of the obligations of justice.**

"A union also provides advocacy for people who are good at what they do, but aren't professionals in advocacy," says Dueck Thiessen.

CLAC ensures that all labour rules are enforced, especially in cases where they might be overlooked. "Say an employee has poor attendance, but they have a disability no one knows about. They could get fired without knowing their rights."

Because they follow a collective agreement, workers are protected from arbitrary decisions by middle managers that seem unfair. It protects the company by providing consistent guidelines for managing employees around discipline.

"Unions also provide an economy of scale," says Dueck Thiessen. "Now the company can give its workers health benefits because they've joined 20,000 people instead of, say, just 100."

Another issue is poor communication. Harmful intent can be assumed where there is none. "Often employers are equally as frustrated as employees," says Eric Stutzman. "Coming to a mutual agreement shows respect."

That respect goes a long way in smoothing over anxieties about power struggles.

## So is it Christian?

There are unions such as CUPE that use non-adversarial approaches as well. That's why some can't make heads or tails of CLAC's Christian designation. But in 1963, the Ontario Labour Relations Board

ruled that a Christian trade union is no more sectarian than a union founded on principles arising out of other world and life views.

CLAC finds itself in an uphill battle, often with heavily politicized opposition. Willingness to step into these waters may have to do with its origins in Reformed theology. Whereas Mennonites developed an alternative economic system called fair trade in 1946, CLAC founders were intent on "reforming" conventional social structures.

This theological distinction still causes confusion today. Take the example of Lode King Industries, central Canada's largest manufacturer of highway flat decks and grain trailers, located in Winkler, Manitoba. In March 2006, their employees voted 77 percent in favour of affiliating with CLAC.

"I know for a fact that it was the word 'Christian' that got them the vote," says Terry Elias, the CEO of Lode King's parent company, Triple E. "The disappointing thing is that that first word immediately slants people's view to accept it." He questions whether they're actually a Christian organization, in the conventional sense of the term, since they don't openly proselytize or limit their numbers to Christian employees. Elias is a member of Winkler Berghaler Mennonite Church, and explains how he's advocated for a pension fund and many informal benefits for his workers with their non-union inhouse collective agreement for the last 25 years.

"Basically any business wants to work according to biblical principles – if we do, we have a good social setting." Though immigrant workers without a high-school education will now have a legal advocate for increased benefits, Elias wonders whether CLAC union dues are actually worth it.

Though skeptical, Elias sees some good that CLAC can do. As a former school board trustee, he found that teacher unions would tire them out, and educational assistants got short shrift. CLAC was recently appointed there to represent the assistants as third-party labour law experts. Elias also suggests that "where they [CLAC] probably perform" is when they address the needs of individual company plants neglected by larger unions.

## More than words?

So do Christian principles actually make a difference in the workplace?

"There's an inherent difference between a Christian and class-conflict mindset," says John Redekop, long-time MB political scientist and president emeritus of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada. He's observed CLAC since the 70s. "I was involved in a union of university faculty, and as a labourer as well. Both Christians and unions claim to be fair, but their message is different. There's a big contrast between cooperation and confrontation. The zero-sum game

*Continued on p. 19*





## Ascension

## Above, where Christ is

*Since, then, you have been raised with Christ,  
set your hearts on things above, where Christ  
is seated at the right hand of God.*

*Colossians 3:1*

## Abraham Kuyper

Our Lord God is a fountain overflowing with all good things. If you confess this, and really mean it, you've got it made!

*Nothing but good things* come from him, and originate with him. And because we only receive good things we may therefore not complain about them, but rather we must give thanks for them. If you cannot give thanks, the fault does not lie with God, but with you. Your vision is impaired, because you cannot see what is truly good. He is the fountain of all good things. Therefore there is no good thing but it flows forth from him.

Whatever there may be in yourself or in your child that is *not* from him, it is *not* good, it is sinful, no matter how beautiful it may appear on the surface. In the same way, when there is something truly good in yourself or your child, it did not come from you, nor from your child, but it has come to you and yours from the ever-flowing fountain of all good things. This leaves no room for pride, or self-righteousness. We are recreated in Jesus Christ to do good works, which God foreordained, so that we may walk in his ways and give thanks for his gifts. [Ephesians 1:10]. When we do something good, the old self in us quickly wants to take credit, but the new self moved by the Spirit says, "It was the Work of God in me".

Of all good things God is the fountain, the gushing well, the mother lode. It is not for you to claim that the good you did was acquired from the Lord after much pleading and effort. Rather, just as water gushes forth from an Artesian well, without any effort in hauling it up, so do good works arise in us from a good and generous God who supplies all these things. You have not initiated anything, but it is God who motivates you by his all-sufficient love.

The Lord is the very abundant fountain of all these good things. Faith can never expect too much. No matter how much you have received, there is always more coming your way. The supply is inexhaustible. No matter how great the need you may have to be quenched with 'good', or even if you have received more than you could imagine, the well continues to overflow with all good. That is why all who recognize this truth *'have got it made'*. That means, you have gotten rid of the pernicious weeds of your self-willed flesh; you have become pure, rich and free as a child of God, and he will re-form you into new life.

Briefly stated, what then are those 'good things' which flow from that fountain? Everything that contributes to his glory and the salvation of your soul.

Does this exclude our daily bread, and the fruit of our labour which we enjoy?

Not at all! Why should it? As long as it is not the only thing we always strive for. If your money, possessions and the fruit of your labour distract from your focus on God, they are no longer 'good things'; it would be better for you to starve to death, if that would bring you back to God.

The good things that flow from the fountain are good for your whole person, body and soul. Nor are they perishable temporary goods, but a lasting treasure. So, in fact, those events in your life that you regard as temptations and evil, will prove to be for your good and therefore for thanksgiving.

The good things that flow from this fountain include all that grants escape from eternal death, and leads you to eternal life. Grace flows from this fountain, and the riches of grace take on many forms like satisfaction and righteous-



*Emily Carr, Upward Trend, 1937*

ness, reconciliation and sanctification, and a myriad of favours received from your God.

Every warning of your conscience flows from that fountain; every remorse after sin; every tear of true repentance; every instance of childlike penitence. From this fountain flows every encouragement of love, all relief of anxiety, and all comfort for fear and distress.

From that fountain flows every word of warning, every corrective voice, every urging to love, everything that might keep you from sinning and call you back to your Lord.

From that fountain flows every kernel of faith, every work of the Holy Spirit, and every repentance of the heart; all things, in short, that might lead you to become a child of God.

To put it bluntly, there has never ever been the smallest spark of pure upright love welling up in your heart, unless it was given to you from the Father. Never did the robe of humility suit you so well, unless it was put on you by Christ. So, if ever there was anything beautiful or lovely in you for which you could receive praise from God, it was because the Father of all light gave it to you, so that it could shine through you.

The right way ought to be clear by now. Should you strive to become more holy, humble, loving or tender, do not look to the barren depths of your own heart, for it cannot be the source of these things. If it is those 'good things' that you earnestly seek, then you should no longer look for the things that are below, but for what is above. But make sure that you really do look 'above' and know that there you will find the true source of all good things that come to you.

When the Holy Spirit tells you to, "seek the things that are above" [Col 3:2] it means that you are drawn and pulled toward the pure gold and true beauty of the heavenly Jerusalem. And it means even more! It also means that you are not to strive for gold or pleasure or honour among people, but that you must long for good works, love, purity, for all that is lovely and beautiful, not in the eyes of men, but for God.

It also means that you must earnestly desire to bear your burdens with joy if they come your way, so you may truthfully appear before the Lord with a good conscience.

All that is lovely and pure does not grow in the soil of your own heart, but is sent down to us from heaven. Love is born there. When at last the silent prayer of the apostle is heard that the peace of God may fill you completely, then you will know that God's peace is a precious gift, coming from the fountain of all good, cascading down to you.

We still have not exhausted the text. So far we have talked about 'good things above', but we have to add, 'above, where Christ is'. This represents a most precious addition to the text, yet in no way does it imply that for Christians all good things flow not from the fountain, but from Christ himself. In that case Christ would replace God in our hearts, and our saviour would become the giver of all good. We must not even dwell on that for a moment. The eternal and blessed Being, who is God, is and remains the Fountain of all good things for all times, for all, and thus also for us.

At the same time, all the waters that flow from that Fountain are gathered up by Jesus Christ to be given to us. Just as surely as our soul is united with one Lord, so also the refreshing gifts of those waters will be ours in abundance. We never need to doubt that.

They come to us from the Eternal One, through Christ the Mediator. If you seek love in order that you can love others, you have but to look to Christ Jesus, to whom has been given all good things for you, from his Father.

If you want kindness, self-denial, humility, then seek these things from above where Christ is, for in him they are stored up for you. Not as common treasures, but as gifts stored away just for you.

He does not use a generic seal, but one made-to-measure just for you with your own initials engraved on it. The robe of righteousness stored up for you, is custom-made for you in heaven.

*Translated by Jack van Meggelen.*



## Art

# Christian art, Emily Carr and trees

Bert den Boggende

In my first year of teaching, about four decades ago, I did a little art experiment with my grade 4-5 students. There was some unused red and blue ink (remember the days before ballpoints?) and I asked the students to make the paper wet, but not too much, and splatter the ink so that there would be some whimsical shapes. While there were some intriguing results, carelessness resulted in uninteresting blobs. Whatever the results the students had fun. Shortly thereafter my principal suggested I take some of the better results along to a regional meeting of Christian school teachers. At the meeting one principal lambasted me, because, he argued, these art products showed nothing Christian. Christian art, he posited, meant illustrating some biblical truths, showing some students' work that included texts.

Later thinking it over, I wondered if an abstraction was less Christian than a nativity scene or a tree less than a crucifixion. For some time now *Christian Courier* has used many art works as illustrations to theological articles. There have been quite a few reproductions by Dürer, Raphael, and Rembrandt, to mention only some familiar names. The illustrations remind me of that incident so long ago and the question "What is Christian art?"

For many people Christian art entails something close to what that principal had in mind. But if non-Christian painters such as Pablo Picasso or Salvador Dali would paint a nativity scene or a crucifixion, would that still be Christian art? Certainly the subject is Christian, but does that make it Christian art? Perhaps you start to feel that there is something amiss here.

Still, this approach has a long tradition. Representative may be C.R. Morey, who in 1935 published the illustrated booklet *Christian Art*, in which he summarized "the five principal phases of Christian art," to note its genesis, Byzantine, Romanesque, Gothic, and Renaissance art. Not surprisingly, *Indian village, Alert Bay 1912*

early catacomb art relied formally on contemporary Greek-Roman art but moved away from it as anyone can readily see in Byzantine art. Much of this art was used to decorate the churches and was used in the liturgy. This church art could be regarded as one definition of Christian art.

As the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas once stated, art could only be called Christian in so far as it conveyed Christian ideas. Whatever Abraham Kuyper meant exactly with "square inch," it is clear that Aquinas' observation does not coincide with that "square inch." It may be noted that Morey ended his survey with the Renaissance, yet I would argue that much Christian art was produced after 1600.

In his well known *Lectures on Calvinism*, given at Princeton University in 1898, Kuyper discussed art in lecture five. When I read that lecture some three decades ago it struck me that Kuyper was quite negative about contemporary art: "No art-style has sprung from the Rationalism of the 18th century, nor from the principle of 1789, and however grievous it may be to our 19th century, all her efforts to create a new art-style of her own have ended in perfect failure." Probably 19th century art failed to "keep [his] eyes fixed upon the Beautiful and the Sublime in its eternal significance."

While negative, Kuyper made it clear that art was not unimportant, a frill as so many Calvinists thought: "Understand that art is no fringe that is attached to the garment, and no amusement that is added to life, but a most serious power in our present existence." Moreover, art until the Reformation period "hitherto confined herself to the holy spheres, had now to make her appearance in the social world." It is not my purpose to examine Kuyper's views on art more



Totem poles, Kitseukla 1912

extensively; I only want to posit that his views show serious deficiencies, and yet they opened the way for a broader definition of Christian art.

To my knowledge *Christian Courier* hasn't used any paintings by Emily Carr to illustrate some theological article. Many of her works show trees and the question may be asked if a tree could be Christian art. Let me give some background to Emily Carr.

Emily Carr was born in 1871 in Victoria, where her father was a prosperous merchant. In *The Book of Small* she later described her childhood, in the process providing vivid vignettes of late 19th-century Victorian life. After studies at the San Francisco School of Art, she returned home in 1895, painting rather conventional works. In 1899 she moved to London, studying at the Westminster School of Art, but missed the Pacific Coast.

After a lengthy illness she again returned home and, interested in Northwest Coast native people, she traveled to their remote villages and painted their totem poles and log houses. These experiences, then and later, she described in *Klee Wyck*, the "Laughing One" as Indians called her.

During her trip to France in 1910-11 she encountered modernist Fauvist coloring, through which she could transfer her emotions onto canvas. As she stated two decades later, she wanted her "things to rock and sway with the breath and fluids of life," although at that particular moment she felt that her canvases were "just paint without vitality, without reality, showing that I myself have not swayed and rocked." At another time she felt "that her sketches have zip to them but they don't strike bottom yet. They move some but I want them

Skidegate (shark pole) 1912





Art

to swell and roll back and forth into space, pausing here and there to fill out the song, catch the rhythm, to go down into the deep places and pause here and there and to rise up into the high ones, exulting.”

For years and years her innovative paintings were unsympathetically received. As art historian J. Russell Harper stated in his 1966 standard *Painting in Canada* (p.307): “Her paintings are all the more remarkable since for years there was not one understanding fellow artist with whom she could discuss her ambitions or her problems, or who could intelligently criticize her work or offer words of encouragement.”

Unable to make a living with painting, she decided in 1913 to keep a boarding house, and although she disliked the experience, she kept it until 1936, describing these experiences later in *The House of All Sorts*. Her eccentricity – in addition to the usual dogs and birds she kept a monkey and a white rat as pets – made her not very suitable to keep a boarding house. Moreover, for months at a time she exchanged the house for rather primitive camping experiences, driven to paint and to write.

The year 1927 brought an important change. Eric Brown of the National Gallery of Canada organized an exhibition of native west coast art and included 26 of Carr’s 1912 paintings. Moreover, he invited her to visit the capital. In Ontario she met members of the Group of Seven, who showed sympathy and enthusiasm. She started keeping a journal, which was later published as *Hundreds and Thousands*, a highly recommended book for painters and writers. On March 18, 1934 she confided to her journal, “Ah, little book, I owe you an apology. I’ve got to like you despite how silly you seemed to me when Lawren [Harris] suggested I start you.” It’s her journal that provides insight into her struggles and her perspective on art.

Several Group of Seven members were strongly influenced by theosophy. Lawren Harris, who gave her much encouragement and whose letters “helped wonderfully,” suggested she try theosophy. Theosophy, “godwisdom,” has its roots in ancient Indian philosophy but in the 19th century Helena Blavatsky brought it to the West, mixing it with Western ideas. It claims special insight into the divine nature and its constituent processes, relies on intuition, and

has a strong mystical component. Accepting that the world is imperfect, its adherents seek to achieve wisdom leading to self-actualization and ultimately to Nirvana. The Dutch painter Piet Mondriaan, brought up as a strict Calvinist (*Christelijk Gereformeerd*) tried to implement theosophy in his abstract works. Harris was moving in the direction of abstraction (see e.g. *North Shore, Lake Superior*, 1926, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa, or *Mt Lefroy*, 1930, McMichael collection, Kleinburg).

Carr tried but in December 1933 she wrote Lawren Harris: “I couldn’t swallow some of the theosophic ideas.... Couldn’t let him think I was wholeheartedly in tune with it, when I am not. I do see the big grandness of much of it. It’s their attitude toward the Bible I can’t endorse. It’s awful to have your holy of holiest dusted with a floor rag and a stable broom.”

She feared that “the snapping of this theosophy bond” would sever her relationship with the Group of Seven members, and she expected Harris to “be very disappointed in me and feel I have retrograded way back, fallen to earth level, dormant, stodgy as a sitting hen. I think he will hardly understand my attitude.” Harris may not have understood, but he didn’t sever the relationship.

It may be observed that she didn’t reject theosophy because it possibly implied moving in the direction of abstraction. In fact, she herself moved in that direction with cubism, which, as art historian Russell Harper noted, gave “her paintings a new character by supplying an underlying structural form and solidarity.”

Her passion was with trees, often looking for strange undergrowth and ‘jungle.’ On one of her sketching trips, in 1934, she wrote, “I am circled by trees. They are full of chatter, the wind and the birds helping them. Through the sighing of the wind they tell their sorrows. Through the chortle of the birds they tell their joy.” Not surprisingly she felt “sketching in the woods wonderful. Everything is green ... colours you had not noticed come out, timidly or boldly.... Sunlight plays and dances. Nothing is still now. Life is sweeping through the spaces. Everything is alive. The air is alive. The silence is full of sound. The green is full of colour. Light and dark chase each other.”



Edge of the forest, 1935

Her study of underbrush was “Green jungle, thick yet loose-packed, solid, yet the very solidity full of air spaces. Perfectly ordered disorder designed with a helter-skelter magnificence.” She often groped for words, but “There are no words, no paints to express all this, only a beautiful dumbness in the soul, life speaking to life. Down under the top greenery there is a mysterious space.”

In this mood she read Psalm 132 and commented: “Surely the woods are God’s tabernacle. We can see Him there. He will be in His place. It is God in His woods’ tabernacle I long to express. Others prepare a tabernacle for Him here and there, in a church, a flower or vegetable garden, a home, a family.

Continued on page 14

Wood interior, 1909



Red cedar, 1931



Sombreness sunlit, 1938



The paintings on the opposing page were done during Carr’s “ethnographic” period. She admired the life and art of the natives, saw that it was vanishing, and sought to record it before it was lost.

In the three forest paintings to the left, we see dramatic changes in style as Carr sought new ways to express what creation impressed on her. In the first, light filters into a thick stand of still trees; in the third the light sweeping through sets the trees a-dancing. In between is one of the paintings in an intermediate period when she painted trees with the mass and solidity of mountains, without losing the sense of organic life. “Edge of the forest” illustrates her discovery of sky. If the deep spirituality of Carr’s painting wasn’t obvious before, here it blazes forth in its full glory.

Editor



## Corinthians

# Light in the darkness of death

*The last enemy to be destroyed [or overthrown] is death.*

I Corinthians 15:26

A.A. van Ruler

Sometime around the age of 40 we begin to think about the end. Before that, in our youth, we labor to come to terms with life. But after that the question poses itself to us: How will I face death?

It is, after all, a strange thing that we have a beginning and an end. Once upon a time we didn't exist. And one day there will come a time when once again we don't exist.

The first usually doesn't pose any problems for us. But if we let the fact sink in that we were called into being out of nothing, we shudder for every now and then as the thought arouses a strong resistance in us.

Yet, this strange finitude and temporality of our existence is something we experience whenever we think of the end and realize that we must one day die. In our youth, life is all that engages us, but later we begin to reflect on the fact that one day it will end.

Paul sees that death is an enemy. That's the first thing that strikes us in this text: "The last enemy to be overthrown is death." He sees plenty of enemies – not just enemies that prey on us and break us down. He reaches higher: these are also enemies of Christ and of God. This good and beautiful creation, the work of God's hands, is beset by sin and death, hunger and poverty, suffering and meaninglessness.

Paul goes on to give this a unique twist. Death is the enemy of Christ and of God, but death is also a judgment from Christ and God. God says to humankind: you are dust and to dust you will return. He lays us in the dust of death. Even from his own point of view, God travels deep paths with his creatures. His own judgment emerges over against him as an enemy.

The complexity becomes even greater when we recall that God's judgment was pronounced against his rebellious creature, and that it includes the destructiveness of death and therefore the most intimate encounter between

God and man. In other words, according to biblical teaching, death is, on the one hand, closely connected with sin, and, on the other, even more closely with atonement for sin. Christ's death penetrates deeper than Adam's. Death, too, is a form of love; it is where God and man find one another.

Finally, we ask ourselves to what extent death has something good and natural about it. Aren't we as creatures finite by nature? Doesn't the fact that creation has a beginning and an end belong to its very nature?

These are questions that arise in all of us, whenever we try to come to terms with death in the light of the biblical message. The latter contains many perspectives. We probably won't know the ultimate and essential things of the matter. We must not only live reverently, we must also die reverently.

Here too we must be God-followers. God too is not nearly finished with death, as Paul emphasizes. He considers death above all as an enemy – as an enemy of Christ and of God. But he does not say that God can cast death aside with a wave of his hand. The gospel is not that superficial. It takes the reality of death very seriously.

It takes it more seriously than other religions do. All non-biblical religions in one way or another escape the fact that we die. They say that the soul is immortal, not subject to death; or that the soul transmigrates into different forms; or that there is a continual return of all things; or that death is only a new phase in the grand process of life; or that death is an entry into nothingness, which is the ultimate reality.

The gospel deprives us of all these comforts and many more like them. Nor does it comfort us with the thought that dead is dead and that's the end of it. It puts us face to face with the reality of the end and of death and says: God is engaged in a struggle with death. In Christ he seeks to dethrone death, to render it harmless, in fact, to destroy it.

But this is not an easy thing. Christ must reign as king till all the powers are put under his feet. This process demands time, it is a long process. The powers, in a manner

of speaking, must be made subject to him from the inside out, by being inwardly hollowed out and convicted. God's power is demonstrated as a gentle power.

One power, however, is more quickly overcome than another. In Christ suffering is more quickly overcome than meaninglessness, and meaninglessness more quickly than sickness, and sickness more quickly than death. Death conceals itself in its domain to the very end. It is not overcome till the very end. Not until the new day, till the return of Christ. Until then he will rule and celebrate his triumphs. And in the meantime we will all continue to die.

Yet, this is not the whole truth. For obversely Christ also rules over death. He rules in the midst of his enemies. The enemies are still here and they still exert a horrific amount of violence. But Christ has entered into it all. He is undergoing it and he bears it all. The rule of horror and meaninglessness is being borne for us. As is the rule of sin and death. It is being borne by Christ and by God himself. Christ's resurrection is a sign that it will all be borne to the end and that God will make it.

This is the way the gospel teaches us to get along with death. It does not deny its reality. Nor does it declare that we can already see the last ground and the end of death. The gospel only says that God is working at it; that he is busy with it in a glorious and grace-filled way; that in Christ he has taken our death upon himself; and that therefore he is with us not just in life but also in death; and that he ultimately will solve the problem of death for us.

Therefore in life and in death we must put our heart's trust without reservation and without condition on Jesus Christ. We cannot dominate life and existence with our reason and understanding. Anyone who does not trust, fears existence; he doesn't have the heart for it. This is all the more true of death: we are even less able to dominate death with our reason and understanding. Everything comes down to this: that we accept death also with our hearts, and thus die in love and in trust.

*Translated by Harry der Nederlanden*

## Christian art, Emily Carr and trees ... continued from p. 13

Everyone has his own special tabernacle set aside for God in the place where He seems nearer." (September 1935).

She came to realize that in order for "the woods movement [to be] stupendous" she needed to give more attention to the sky. On June 15, 1935 she stated: "On days like today the relationship between the tree and the sky is very close. That, I think, is what makes a picture, a thought so expressed that the relationship of all the objects is shown to be in their right place. I used to paint a picture and stick in an interesting sky with clouds etc. It wasn't part of the conception of the whole. Now I know that the sky is just as important as the earth and the sea in working out the thought."

At times she wondered if she didn't restrict herself too much: "Am I one-idea'd, small, narrow? God is in them all. Now I know that is all that matters. The only thing worth striving for is to express God. Every living thing is God made manifest. All real art is the eternal seeking to express God, the one substance out of which all things are made." But she stuck to the woods: "Go out there into the glory of the woods. See God in every particle of them expressing glory and strength and power, tenderness and protection."

Sometimes it sounded somewhat pantheistic, probably influenced by theosophy: "To attain in art is to rise above the external and temporary to the real of the eternal reality, to express the 'I am,' or God, in all life, in all growth, for there is nothing but God." (November-December 1932).

She came to believe that "there is no true art without religion. The artist himself may not think he is religious but if he is sincere his sincerity in itself is religion." Instead of "all the theosophy formula" she felt she held to "less complicated beliefs": "God in all. Always looking for the face of God, always listening for the voice of God in Nature. Nature is God revealing himself, expressing his wonders and his love, Nature clothed in God's beauty of holiness." (July 1933)

She tried to express her God-search in her paintings: "on, on, deeper and deeper, with the soul of the thing burrowing into its depths and intensity till that thing is a reality to us and speaks one grand inaudible word – God. The movement and direction of lines and planes shall express some attributes of God – power, peace, strength, serenity, joy." What ultimately counted was not form, colour, design, or technique, for "if the spirit does not speak, nothing has been said even though the surface forms clamour and clank." (October, December 1933)

Conviction had to speak through a work of art; if you didn't write or paint what was your own, you were stealing, an act against God. "Art," she posited, "is an aspect of God, and there is only one God, but different people see Him in different ways. Though He is always the same He doesn't always look the same – as the woods are the same, the trees standing in their places, the rocks and the earth, but they are different too as light and shadows and seasons and moods pass through them." (April 1934)

In her second to last journal entry, January 1, 1941 she sadly commented that "the young have rooted God from their lives, explained him away with science. Life is nothing without God."

She had seen and experienced God in nature, trying to capture some of its glory as a reflection of his glory. Russell Harper's standard text made no mention of Carr's attempt to reflect God's glory; he stuck to the surface. And how different Carr's approach was to that of the principal mentioned in the opening paragraph. The 'square inch' she depicted she claimed for God.

Emily Carr, one of Canada's great painters, died in 1945.

*Bert den Boggende, Brooks, AB*  
In addition to the four books by Carr mentioned in this article, see also her autobiography *Growing Pains*. Astronomically inclined readers may try to locate the Emily Carr crater on Venus.



Emily Carr



## Reflections



Ecosystem Preserve entrance at Calvin

## General revelation at Calvin

At the Prince Center  
me at the computer  
a peaceful lobby  
(except for one  
boisterous cackler of the human kind)  
quiet clean  
neat friendly  
who could ask for more?

Behind the Prince Centre  
the pond with frog plopping in  
mallard hen and young scurrying  
two garter snakes soaking up warmth  
redwings deciding which clump would make the best home  
muskrat droppings  
a tree swallow gulping insects over the water  
woodchuck burrows (have the foxes stolen them?)

willows leaved out  
grapevines grasping, sometimes choking  
honeysuckle, pink and white, in bloom  
violets carpeting the ground in the shade  
competing with feral periwinkle

And across the lawn  
without a weed  
2-4-D'd into obedience  
across the bridge to  
Calvin campus  
with perfect landscaping  
and home to cell phones abusing people  
(nine of fifteen couldn't hear to say "hello" back)  
and birds  
house sparrows with irritating chirp –  
the only birdsong heard above the Beltline hum –  
stuffing the fire alarm with their anarchic nest



Bunker Interpretive Center at Calvin

At the Seminary  
I sit and take notes,  
talk, think, pray, and discuss  
theology  
general revelation  
I have my agenda  
but no birdbook, binoculars  
no raucous silence  
of bird and plant  
life

Curt Gesch  
for Alina

## Redefining roles

Last month our son Zion, our daughters Jacoba and Zekijah and I went to a family reunion for Marisa's extended family. This was the first time I had seen the larger family since they came to support each other at Marisa's funeral. Naturally, this time, the family reunion was different. Things had changed. Marisa's illness had been a topic of conversation, an item of prayer and a reason for reminded cohesion for the family.

When I started dating Marisa, I had to carve my space into her family. I can remember the first time I was going to meet her parents and sisters: I left early to make sure I was on time. I stopped at the gas station close to her house to make sure my shirt was tucked in. I brought extra deoderant. I now drive by that same gas station and remember that day fondly.

When Marisa and I were married, I had to again figure out what place I had in the VanderVeen family. They were now family to me, whether I liked it or not and thankfully I did, because I was their son-in-law.

And now that Marisa has died, I have to again redefine my role in Marisa's family. The seldom spoken truth is that it is difficult. It is difficult to know what my place is in terms of birthdays, Christmas, reunions, and Sunday afternoon visits. It is easy to say to just go to all the events. It is easy to say, just go with the feel or flow but being with Marisa's family without Marisa is not easy.

Don't get me wrong here, Marisa's family are wonderful people but is difficult because each time it is another shocking reminder that Marisa isn't here. It is difficult because Marisa's wisdom is missed. It is difficult because sometimes we just don't know what to say. All the relationships that I had with Marisa's family need to be redefined.

However my relationship with Marisa's family

aren't the only ones that need redefining. All of my relationships need to be redefined.

I have a new role with our children. I need to redefine my role with my own brothers and sisters. I am a new Mendelt. There is a tangible distinction between pre-cancer and post-cancer Mendelt. They are two different people. The old Mendelt died with Marisa.

I have a new role with my basketball buddies and with my neighbours. I have a new role with the kind people in our church, with the employees at the local grocery store, the bank, the hardware store and the bike store. Everywhere I go, my role with people has to be redefined.

I even have to redefine the role that I see myself in this world. What should/can a 34 year old, father of three, recently widowed do to further the Kingdom?

Which brings me to the most important role that has to be redefined. My role with Jesus. Jesus' grace is different for me since Marisa has died. It is thicker, seems closer to grasp, more difficult to comprehend yet easier to accept.

Redefining roles is not easy. It is not easy because in my situation, there is love and hope and death involved. There are promises involved and that is hard stuff. That stuff forces perspective and that stuff changes people.

We went to the family reunion. We packed in the van, drove a couple hours and we did our best. And at the end of it, by doing it, we honoured Marisa. We shook hands and hugged. Some of the brave *Christian Courier* readers kissed me. We reunited and began our new relationships.

Mendelt D. Hoekstra is the founder and director of the Music Therapy program at Bethesda, an organization owned and operated by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Ontario, that supports adults with developmental possibilities. He lives in Vineland, ON with his three children.

## Is your Lord large enough?

**Is Your Lord Large Enough?  
How C. S. Lewis Expands Our  
View of God.**

Written by Peter J. Schakel  
(Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2008)

Reviewed by

Sonya VanderVeen Feddema

God can't be put in a box. We all know that. Yet, sometimes, because of our refusal to grow in our knowledge and understanding of who God is, we try to do exactly that. We want to be in control of our conception of God instead of allowing him to shape and expand our conception of him.

Peter Schakel's interesting and stimulating book challenges Christians on this matter. He shows how C. S. Lewis, who fervently wanted believers to grow in faith, repeatedly dealt with this issue in his writing by asking: "Is your Lord large enough?" What he meant was "Is your image of Christ, your conception of God, as large as it should be?" (pp. 13) None of us can claim that it is. We all need to grow in that area. If we don't, our relationship to God "will become static, like a photo that you place on your desk and look at but don't interact with in a living relationship. Images need to be constantly growing. They need to change as you learn things that don't fit the old image and force you to replace it with



a fuller, more adequate image" (pp. 12).

Schakel highlights twelve central issues that recur as major themes throughout Lewis's writings – God's time and our time; prayer; God's grace and our goodness; why we need the church; making sense out of suffering; dealing with doubt; and picturing heaven, to name a few.

In his book, *A Grief Observed*, Lewis wrote "that we need constantly to smash the images we form of God, so they can expand into new and larger ones. If we do not, our image of God will turn into an idol, that is, into a solidified idea that we worship instead of worshipping the living God. If we allow it, God will start breaking those images for us" (pp. 16).

Reading Schakel's book led this reader to confront the images she has formed of God, images that need to be constantly shaped by the Holy Spirit and not by human understanding. If you long to do the same thing, read Schakel's book and discover what the character Lucy, in the *Chronicles of Narnia*, learned from Aslan, the great lion who represents Christ, when he said, "Every year you grow, you will find me bigger" (pp. 14).

Because of the way Schakel structured his book, it can be read in several contexts, either for personal devotions and growth, or in a group setting. Thought-provoking questions at the end of each chapter help readers apply what they have read to their own lives and, in a larger context, to the life of Christ's body, the church.



## Food

Eating  
my  
words

Angela Bick

## A digestive system gospel

"I believe," Menno Wiebe once said, "in a gospel that reaches right into the digestive system." He served Canada's native population for a decade, and noticed a growing dependence on processed food. Besides the expense, Wiebe saw the negative effects of pre-packaged food – not only on physical health, but social and spiritual as well. Without sharing a meal, it's hard for neighbours to become friends. Growing, gathering, and preparing food brings people closer together and closer to an awareness of God's goodness. In 1977, Wiebe started Mennonite Central Committee Canada's Native Gardening program. A hoe, he'd discovered, can be more than a garden implement. It can be a tool for evangelism as well.

A shared space to garden may be one of those old ideas coming around again to sound like something new. It has a particular appeal to city dwellers who might not have adequate backyards. Members of the garden share responsibility for its management and maintenance. It encourages a more sustainable local food network, and helps to foster a sense of pride in the neighbourhood. Recently, community gardens have become enormously popular, with over ten thousand operating successfully in North America today. As Wiebe realized, this is a fantastic opportunity for churches. It's a chance to revitalize relationships between church members and, more importantly, between churches and communities.

A Baptist church in Arkansas, for example, plowed up nearly an acre behind its central building and called the project "Seeds of Hope." They produced a wide variety of crops, which church members distributed to the neighbourhood. "We received a blessing, they received a blessing through the vegetables and fresh fruit, and we showed them the love of Christ," said Pastor Terry Simmons. Even urban churches can grow something if they're creative enough; the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Chicago harvested 984 pounds of vegetables from its rooftop garden in 2005.

Carina Schuurman is a member of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church in Hamilton, Ontario. A number of years ago, the local Christian high school outgrew the building adjacent to Immanuel. The high school re-located and Neighbour-to-Neighbour – a food bank and drop-in centre – opened in its place. Half of the old school was torn down, however, and the church had to decide what to do with the land. Rather than putting up another building, Immanuel decided to put down roots instead. And that's how, with Schuurman's help, Athens Street Community Garden began.

"The plots produced like crazy in 2007, despite two months of no rainfall

whatsoever," Schuurman says. "I think the Lord wanted us to be very encouraged by this unbelievable, lush success." Friendships between church and community members were renewed this spring when the garden re-opened for the season. This year, Schuurman was excited to welcome two refugee families from Burma. John Geerts, a church member and gardener, says that if last year seemed lush, "you should see our plots now!" The food bank might come in handy for those gardeners with more zucchini than they know what to do with in August.

My parents have always had a garden; my grandparents depended upon it. I think that a church garden can be the place where my generation learns the skills that – at the risk of generalizing – the previous generation knows and mine does not. Hopefully, my children will pick up the knowledge at the same time. As Barbara Kingsolver writes in *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*, "I enjoy denial as much as the next person, but this isn't rocket science: our kids will eventually have to make food differently. They could be assisted with some familiarity with how vegetables grow from seeds. . . and how whole ingredients can be made into meals" (21).

There was a meeting in Barrie City Hall a few weeks ago. A Landscape Architectural Technologist and the city's real estate lawyer faced off against two lawyers from the Catholic district school board. A stenographer took notes. The argument was about a small triangle of land: the city owned it, the school leased it, and now a near-by church wants it to start a community garden. The school board lawyers muttered about liability and insurance premiums. The city planners passed around aerial photos and business cards. Finally, terms were agreed upon. A proposal was drawn up. "This is an encouraging grass-roots initiative," one man kept saying with a sideways glance at me. Yup, they invited the grass-roots initiative: my friend, her newborn son, and me. A garden-variety grass-roots initiative, and the baby behaved beautifully.

We will wait for City Council's approval, just as we waited for our church Council's blessing. It's the same patience that gardening takes, as my daughter is currently learning. I think she checked on our newly-planted tomato seeds twelve times in one hour, hoping they'd be ready to eat by lunch. At least, after this summer, she won't have the same experience that Gavin Dandy



had as an adult: "I can remember looking intently at a tomato plant and wondering to myself where in the heck the tomatoes would come from."

A few days later, I was astounded to see the green fruits emerging from the yellow flowers" (from *The Lure of Farming*, forthcoming). Let's start church-run community gardens all across this country. Let's try reaching into the digestive system with the gospel. If we do, I bet that the ordinary miracle of flowers into fruit will just be the beginning, for God is capable of far more astounding things.

Photos of Immanuel's garden can be seen at <http://immanuelministries.ca> and click on the community garden link.

If you are interested in starting a community garden, there's a wealth of information online. [www.communitygarden.org](http://www.communitygarden.org)  
[www.urbangardeninghelp.com](http://www.urbangardeninghelp.com)  
[www.urbanharvest.org/programs/cgardens/startguide](http://www.urbanharvest.org/programs/cgardens/startguide)  
[www.cityfarmer.org](http://www.cityfarmer.org) (Canadian site)

## Crustless zucchini tomato quiche

- 2 cups zucchini (chopped)
- 1 cup tomatoes (chopped)
- ½ cup onion (chopped)
- ½ cup Parmesan cheese (grated)

Place in greased 10-inch pie pan.

- 1 ½ cups milk
- ¾ cup Baking mix (use commercial pancake or biscuit mix, or see below)
- ½ tsp. salt
- ¼ tsp. pepper
- 3 eggs

Beat with mixer or whisk until smooth. Pour over vegetables. Bake in preheated oven at 400 F about 30 mins. Let stand before serving.

- Baking Mix:*
- ½ c. flour
- ½ tsp. baking powder
- 1 tsp. sugar
- pinch salt
- 1 ½ Tbsp. shortening
- 1 ½ Tbsp. milk powder

**Fall variation:** substitute finely chopped broccoli, spinach, or kale for the zucchini.



Angela Reitsma Bick lives in Barrie, Ontario.  
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Places

Recreation leader ensured a memorable vacation

Lisa M. Petsche

The year I turned 13, my parents booked a week at a lakefront resort, a departure from our family's usual summer plans. This afforded us a wealth of recreational opportunities. Little did we know, though, how big a role the activities director would play in our enjoyment of them.

We met Richard within hours of our arrival, at a welcome reception in the lodge. He was dressed as a genie.

At first we didn't know what to make of him. But he was entertaining and outgoing, and guests – ourselves included – were drawn to him. Over the course of the week we would spend a considerable amount of time in his company.

A colourful, 30-something character, Richard had boundless energy, a love of adventure, a wacky sense of humour and a gift for storytelling. He'd traveled to exotic places and would regale us with tales, some no doubt embellished. We'd never met anyone like him.

Delightfully spontaneous, he'd show up as a fortune teller or with a guitar in hand, ready to start a sing-a-long in the lounge. He connected effortlessly with people as well as nature. This made Richard perfect for his job.

No one knew what he did or where he lived the rest of the year, or how the resort's owners had found him. An intriguing sense of mystery surrounded him. All we knew was that he'd been working there for a few summers.

In keeping with Richard's easygoing nature, the recreation program was informal. Some activities were pre-planned, while others were announced at breakfast. Day trip destinations varied, according to Richard's whims.

The most memorable events were the "wet shoe" trips. I recall moments of anxiety during each of them, but Richard's confidence and enthusiasm were contagious, ultimately overpowering my fears.

There was the excursion to one of the local falls, where we crossed white water by hopping on boulders. And the island trip where, in order to glimpse a blue heron's nest, we scaled a muddy cliff.

Then there was the river trek. A mixed group of families, honeymooners and older couples, we were dropped off mid-morning at the riverbank with canoes, paddles, lifejackets and boxed lunches.

The water was unusually shal-

low, and cautious navigation was required. At times we had to carry our canoes. One of the newlyweds became mired in mud and it took considerable effort to free him.

During our lunch break, rain clouds moved in. The drizzle continued most of the afternoon. Unfazed, Richard tried to keep our spirits up, singing and telling jokes. But we couldn't get out of the canoes fast enough when we finally reached our destination and the waiting vehicles. What a disaster, I thought, drenched and miserable. That evening, though, Richard had us laughing about our misadventures.

With Richard's persuasion, my sisters and I also tried water skiing – again and again, until we got the hang of it. "Can't" wasn't in his vocabulary.

Our last night at the resort, Richard handed out certificates for "bravery, endurance and valour" exhibited during the week's activities. I still have mine.

The next summer, we were thrilled to reunite with Richard for another week of adventures. Highlights included climbing a 30-metre steel fire tower, participating in a postcard photo session and launching a war canoe – an event covered by the local press.

Disappointingly, Richard wasn't on staff when we returned the following year. He hadn't been available and no one knew the details. There was a new recreation director, capable enough, but things simply weren't the same. They couldn't be.

My family has often reminisced about those two unique vacations and wondered where life's journey has since taken Richard.

I envision him still single and nomadic, a free spirit pursuing eclectic interests around the globe. Somehow, I can't imagine him settled down, with a steady job, a wife and kids (and maybe grandkids). But you never know.

In any case, thanks, Richard. Not only for all the fun, but also for encouraging us to stretch our limits.

We went home with some great stories we've enjoyed sharing over the years – no embellishments needed.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance writer specializing in family life.



Had enough of restored tractor exhibits?  
Go visit the Vasa Museum

It's that time of year again. I've been to numerous steam shows and have seen rows and rows of antique tractors and vehicles on display. The first time I saw restored tractors at the International Plowing Match (IPM), I was impressed.

Next month, the Tented City (IPM) will be held in Bruce County – just

north of Teeswater, Ontario. Twenty-five of the 100 acres of the Tented City will be dedicated to antique equipment, displays and demonstrations. An 80' x 260' tent will house small antiques and equipment, and vehicles from yesteryear. There will be hundreds of antique tractors on display – tractors of every make and model.

I don't want to see any more restored tractors at plowing matches. I'm all antiqued out!

I am a history buff so don't get me wrong. I love going to museums. If you want to see something amazing and you love traveling, go and visit the Vasa Museum in Stockholm, Sweden. The museum holds a grand warship that was built in 1628 and is the only one of its type in the world. And what a warship it is. It measures 136 feet long and 34 feet wide. It's a massive ship for that time built with 1,000 tons of oak.

Our tour guide told us if the king of Sweden (King Gustavus 11) had not interfered with the construction of the ship, it would not have sunk on her maiden voyage in 1628. When the king demanded more guns than called for in the original plan, the shipbuilder realized that he needed an unprecedented second gun deck.

Before the 64 canons were lashed into place, 30 men ran back and forth across the deck performing a stability test. The ship rocked dangerously. But the king wanted this ship, the nation was at war with Poland and 12 other ships had recently been lost.

The Vasa was to be one of four ships built in the Stockholm shipyard. Oak was the principal wood used, and many of the timbers had to be found growing in just the right shape.

The Vasa sailed about a mile on a fine August day with a light wind in her beam. As she left the shelter, a breeze caught the canvas. She heeled, then righted herself and then heeled again hard over to port. Water gushed in the port holes and she sank swiftly in 110 feet of water in the harbour.

In the king's currency, the Vasa cost a little over five per cent of Sweden's GNP.

The wreckage of the Vasa was not recovered until 1956. Heavy steel cables were laid under the hull and attached to submergible pontoons, which



were gradually able to lift the hull. In 1961, after 333 years on the seabed the Vasa broke the surface. After being salvaged the Vasa spent just a short time in the open, first afloat and then dry-docked. During this very intense period, work on the ship was done on many levels.

In addition, since then more than 24,000 items from the ship have been recovered. To accomplish this, divers had to sift through some 40,000 cubic yards of mud in the Vasa's grave. The hull is amazingly well preserved.

How do you preserve 1,000 tons of oak, 14,000 wooden components, 500 figure sculptures and 12,000 small objects?

The method adopted was immersion or spraying with polyethylene glycol and water. The general idea was to displace the seawater in the wood to prevent shrinkage and splitting. The spraying of the hull continued for 17 years.

At the same time as work was done on the ship and her artifacts, the first museum was planned and built. The ship on her new floating platform covered by an aluminum building was towed to the museum site in 1962. The old museum (Vasavaret) was not perfect at all, but in many ways preservation came first, and the public second. The building around the ship was there to enable the conservation process, so the spectators shared the same damp conditions as the ship.

In 1990, the new Vasa Museum opened to the public. It's a huge museum and dimly lit so to preserve the wood. The tall ship is on one side of the building. The second floor of the building houses the many artifacts and the canons and you can see what life was like for the many sailors and soldiers who lived and worked on these ships in the 1600's. You also have a great view of the ship from the top.

What is so amazing seeing this ship is that 95 per cent of the ship survived. You see the original ship – not a replica. And no old tractors on display!

Maynard van der Galien visited northern European countries, including Russia. He enjoyed a tour of a large beef (Charolais) farm operation in Finland.





## Reflections



**Welcome to my perch**  
Bert Witvoet

The Pope was in Australia and drew

a crowd of 150,000. Barak Obama was in Berlin and drew a crowd of 200,000. I wonder about the similarities between these two events. The number of "pilgrims" is similar, given the difficulty of estimating large crowds. The centre of attention at both event is a famous person, and everybody loves to be associated with fame – be able to say that they saw and heard the famous person. But I wonder if the significance does not lie deeper. I have a hunch that in both cases people were looking for hope, seeking assurance, maybe even looking for a saviour.

### Two saviours

Pope Benedict represents the closest thing to a saviour, you could say ... if you were a Catholic. He is considered the prime representative of Christ. There is a saying in Latin that conveys that message: "Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia." (Where Peter is, there is the church.) Today's "Peter" is none other than the Pope. In other words, where the Pope is, there is the church. And by inference, where the Church is, there is Christ. I like the current Pope. He has wise words to say. He is a clear voice in a moral and spiritual wilderness. I am sure that the thousands of pilgrims were looking for a religious experience.

But one could say the same thing about the thousands of people that came to hear Barak Obama. Barak may be a politician, but he presents himself as a beacon of hope, as an agent of change that will restore the reputation of the United States, and bring peace to the world. And the crowds want to believe it. Barak is a clear voice in the political wilderness. Well, I don't know how clear the content of his message is, but he carries himself well, and, perhaps, he can restore confidence in the leadership of the United States.

The content of the Pope's message is clear, and its authority is based on something quite substantial. The Pope has centuries of Christian teachings backing him up. I venture to say that the religious experience of taking part in an outdoor mass with Pope Benedict can be profound. To be together with hundreds of thousands believers and to partake of the Eucharist can be a heartfelt, faith-strengthening event.

### Gathering of the humble

But I would not be a good Protestant if I did not cringe at the thought that one man presents himself as the prime representative of Christ. And to believe that where the Pope is, there is the church, flies in the face



of the teachings of Scripture in Matthew 18:20: "For where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them." That's Jesus talking to his disciples. There's no mention of a Peter or a future pope needing to be there. And Jesus says that right after he asks his disciples who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. "His answer is unequivocal: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like a little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.'"

I am not suggesting at all that the Pope cannot be like a little child, cannot be humble even in the midst of the veneration that is poured at his feet. What I am saying is that we don't need the pope to enter the kingdom of heaven, or to be the church. Any humble believer warrants a crowd of 150,000 enthusiastic pilgrims to join her in the act of worship. We would gain no more or no less from the celebrated appearance of a 70-year-old husband who, in the name of Christ, cares for his Alzheimer-stricken wife. Bring on the Hopemobile!

### Come home!

My current thoughts about the Pope were evoked by a recent discussion about the fate of the Anglican Church. We have all heard or

read that many Anglican bishops declined the invitation to be at the Lambeth conference. They are disturbed about developments in the worldwide communion of Anglicans regarding the ordination of female bishops and gay bishops, as well as the sanctioning of gay marriages. Without going into the merits of their protest, let me say that the developments elicited discussions about a possible break-up of the worldwide Anglican community. And we could hear voices in the press that said to the protesting members of the Anglican Church, "Why don't you come back to the Mother Church? After all, Ubi Petrus, ibi ecclesia."

I must say, there are times when that call has some appeal to me. Nobody likes the schisms that have torn the church apart throughout the centuries (although a favourite hymn reminds us that the church has also been oppressed by heresies). And to be part of a community of believers that is as international and multi-ethnic as the Catholic Church is, to me, at least, an attractive proposition. And I'm not even talking about all these ancient cathedrals, most of them belonging to the Roman church) that by themselves inspire a feeling of infinity. No wonder that many young unbelievers feel more comfortable in a cathedral than in a modern church building that lacks mystery and where everything is so upfront!

### Seven angels

Ah yes, to belong to Mother Church with a definite centre of authority and a long-standing tradition and history! But I'm being lulled into a romantic notion of what belonging to the Church of Jesus Christ really means. It's time to pick up the Bible and to read the Book of Revelation. Jesus, who is the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, addresses the seven churches of Asia – seven, not one! And John is to write down a letter addressed to the seven angels of each church, not to a pope who has been set over these seven churches. And each local church is addressed separately, with specific praise, warning or condemnation.

I'm not against denominations. But I do think that the critical weight of orthodoxy and faithful practice lies at the local level. I believe that Ubi Spiritus, ibi ecclesia – where the Spirit is, there is the church.

Which also means that we don't need a human saviour other than Christ. And that goes for the Pope and for Obama!

*Bert Witvoet is the former editor of CC, now retired, who stays active by editing the Christian Educators Journal and preaching the occasional sermon. He tries to stay informed by hearing and reading the daily news and Reformed by looking for writers and speakers who can tell the forest from the trees.*





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Business directory

Can there be a Christian labour union?...continued from p. 10

was drilled into me years ago – if we win a game, others lose. There was a time when it had some validity to it, when coal miners were abused and being squeezed for every ounce of profit. But it really doesn't apply now, where unionized labour has incomes far above average across the country.

"I've observed that where CLAC is organized, there's an absence of animosity and inflammatory rhetoric, and a commitment not to hurt the public and third parties," says Redekop. "And CLAC members often do better than others because they very rarely go on strike and work together with management for the good of the entire workplace."

**A different story**

The fastest growing union in Canada is not without its critics, however. From a labour union perspective (though not illegal), CLAC "raids" other workplaces by getting there first to strike deals with, instead of strike against, management. Their voluntary recognition agreements have also come under attack (although the mainstream labour movement engages in these types of agreements as well), with opponents accusing CLAC of using them to keep other unions out and preventing workers from having meaningful input into contract negotiations. For opponents, it seems, the word "democracy" is an indispensable accessory with which to club an opponent.

Darlene Dziewit, president of the Manitoba Federation of Labour, has negotiated for unions for 17 years. She points to a 1996 report by the Manitoba Labour Relations Board, which found that CLAC sent out-of-province members from Alberta to a Manitoba Hydro local and tried to sign an agreement which none of the 200 other employees knew about. The collective agreement was found unlawful.

"When employers really like the union, you have to ask how well that union can represent the workers," says Dziewit. She notes that CLAC has only had four strikes since 1952, but they're known for suing people – "which never really goes anywhere." She says CLAC's claims of cooperation are also overrated, since unions settle 95 percent of collective agreements without any strike.

social institution that believes a holistic life is something more than rights, health, and democracy.

For Darlene Dziewit, "unions can supply people with a sense of belonging to something bigger." This is true of the labour movement as a whole. But in the case of CLAC, unions and work open up a discussion about a non-materialistic vision of the human good.

"Work at its best is an expression of *shalom*," says CLAC research and training director, Gideon Strauss. *Shalom* is more than peace and conflict resolution. *Shalom* suggests physical, spiritual, economic, and social wholeness and well-being. Strauss is able to articulate these concepts on week-long staff retreats where they discuss the theoretical basis of their organization.

**Pointing to something greater**

The tension between union movements is a familiar part of labour history, however. For an organization that claims that, "the meaning of work is in the meaning of life itself," there's a lot to live up to. As Winkler's Terry Elias says, "In a very buoyant economy it's difficult to say who's entitled to what."

For Christians, CLAC is an option that at least emphasizes work as a vocation, employers and employees alike. Yes, Christians have been union leaders, and there are secular unions that practice nonadversarial approaches. CLAC too, is a business. But they're also a legally recognized Canadian

Though the entire labour movement has been influenced by the Christian idea of vocation, even in Marxist thought, Strauss says CLAC is more than just secular humanism. Although you won't find language like *shalom* on their website, Strauss says CLAC creates a message that makes sense to a broader public without being explicitly Christian, using words like collaboration and cooperation. Nevertheless, he says, "I cannot articulate at the deepest level what work is about without drawing on the resources of *shalom* in the Scriptures."

Andrew Siebert is assistant editor of the MB Herald. Used with permission.

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Anniversaries

Brampton 1953  
Barrie 2008

**ENNO AND LENIE MEIJERS (Roorda)**

celebrated their  
**55th Wedding Anniversary** this summer

Congratulations, Mom and Dad  
We love you and  
are thankful for your commitment  
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Hinke & Ed, *Calgary, AB*  
Gloria & Calvin, *Kitchener, ON*  
Corinna & Glen, *Oak Bay, BC*  
Enno & Ruby, *Barrie, ON*  
Phyllis & Jeff, *Barrie, ON*  
15 grandchildren & 3 great-grandchildren

Revelation 21:1-4

282-G2 Hurst Drive  
Barrie ON L4N 0Z3

Williamsburg  
1983  
August 20  
Drayton  
2008

With thankfulness and praise to God we hope  
to celebrate our **25th Wedding Anniversary** with  
our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren D.V


**DIRK AND WILLEMEN LAMMERS (Harbers-Grotenhuis)**

Nancy & Bill Pennings  
Annette & Albert Pennings  
Wilma & Jack Jousstra  
Don & Maaike Grotenhuis  
Sylvia & John Leistra  
Mary-Joyce & Derrick Grift  
22 grandchildren & 12 great-grandchildren

Home address  
60 Main Street West Box 47  
Drayton ON N0G 1P0

Wedding Text  
*But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*  
Joshua 24:15b


August 29, 1948, Koekange, Drenthe  
August 29, 2008, Grimsby, Ontario



With joy and thankfulness to our Lord  
we are happy to announce the  
**60th Wedding Anniversary**  
of our dear parents

**HENRY and LAMMIE RUMPH**

Irene & Art Dreyer  
Kerry & Melissa Dreyer - Jacob, Braeden  
Tim & Amanda Dreyer - Ethan  
Jason & Alisha Dreyer  
Jeff & Courtney Dreyer  
Arnold & Karen Eising  
Melanie Eising  
Shari Lynn Eising & Ryan Streutker  
Karina Eising  
Brian & Tina Rumph  
Victoria Rumph  
Brandon Rumph  
Laura Rumph



1958  
September  
2008

*As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*  
Joshua 24:15b

With thankful hearts, we are pleased to announce  
the **Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary** of our parents,

**JOHN AND JANET SCHENK (nee Vos)**

We invite you to celebrate with us during our  
**Open House Reception** on Saturday, September 13, 2008  
at the Georgetown Christian Reformed Church,  
11611 Trafalgar Road, Georgetown, Ontario,  
from 1:30 to 4:00 p.m. Best Wishes only.  
We look forward to celebrating this day with you.

With love from your children and grandchildren,  
Jeff and Marianne Schenk - Janelle, Kirstin, and Lareina  
Jennifer and Will Slofstra - Kathleen, David, Joel, and Selena  
James and Janet Schenk - Meghan, Colin, and Brett

To send them a congratulatory note:  
Mail: 10809 6th Line RR3, Georgetown ON L7G 4S6  
Email: jjschenk@295.ca

August 22, 1958 - August 22, 2008

Together with our children  
and grandchildren,  
family and friends

**HENRY AND MARGARET ESHUIS**  
will celebrate with joy and gratitude  
their **50th Wedding Anniversary**

Their children:  
Sonya & Joe Bechard  
Brad, Gabrielle, Monique  
Jim & Jocelyn Eshuis  
James, David, Danielle, Samantha  
Mark & Maria Eshuis  
Reuben, Ingrid  
Jamila & Ken Axtmann  
Brandon, Diego

**Open House**  
Saturday, August 23, 2008  
2 - 4 p.m. at  
Trinity Christian Reformed Church  
St. Catharines, Old Martindale Road

Our address after July 24 will be  
**50 Tanner Drive, Fonthill ON L0S 1E4**  
**SOLI DEO GLORIA**

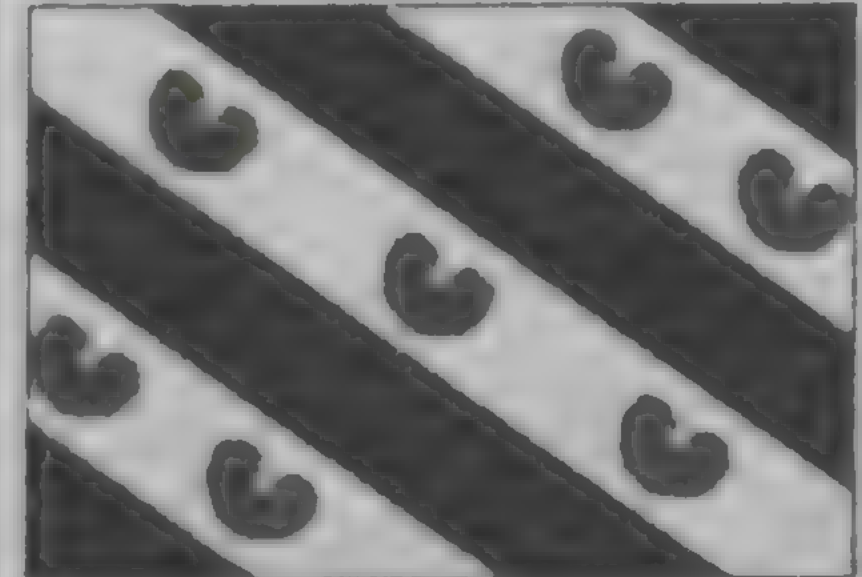
With love and congratulations from your family:

Mary & John DeWeerd  
Julie & Elden Westendorp - Carly, Shaelyn, Justine  
Mike & Tracy DeWeerd - Kaitlyn, Cody, Ryan, Richard  
Steve & Judy DeWeerd - Jasmine, Josh, Jocelyn  
Rob DeWeerd  
Cindy & Henry Bloemberg  
Lance & Cheryl Bloemberg - Jake, April  
Mark & Kelly Bloemberg - Austin  
Richard & Kelly Bloemberg - Olivia, Avery  
Albert & JoAnne Rumph  
Debbi & Ryan Meester - Alana  
Janet & Harold Janssen  
Christy & Jim Leva - Kaylyn  
Dan & Cheryl Janssen - Evan, Aren  
Brenda & Brian Kuyper

Family and friends are invited to an **OPEN HOUSE** on Friday, August 29, 2008 from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.  
at Mountainview Christian Reformed Church, 290 Main St. E. Grimsby, Ontario

Home address: 220 - 275 Main St E, Grimsby ON L3M 5N8

Obituaries



**FRYSKE WYKEIN**  
SNEON, 23 AUGUSTUS,  
DE MIDDEIS OM IEN OERE

Yn 'e  
TILSONBURG FAIRGROUNDS

RINGRIIDEN MEI SPANNEN FRYSKE HYNDERS

Netild wat smuk neiprate mei wat iten en drinken wylst de  
Bern har fernuverje kinne mei spulsjes en swimmen.  
Der is 'n camping foar dyjingen dy't oernachtsje wolle.  
Skilje efkes nummer \_\_\_\_\_

**SNEIN, 24 AUGUSTUS: FRYSKE TSJERKETSJINST.**  
De middeis om trije oere yn 'e Maranatha Reformearre  
Tsjerke yn Woodstock. (Besjuch de advertinsje)

For more information, contact Edna Salverda at 519-842-5684

Nieuwlande, Drente, Dec. 24, 1933  
Cambridge, Ontario. July 6, 2008  
After nearly a year of illness

**DICK DYK**

died peacefully in his sleep in the knowledge that he went to his Lord and Saviour.  
During the last month he received the best of care at the "Lisaard House", Cambridge.

Predeceased by son Simon Dyk, parents Simon & Ida Dyk and two older sisters.  
Beloved husband (for 49 years) of Ekka Dyk-Wigboldus.

Loving father and grandfather of  
Edward & Caroline - Caitlin, Travis & Justine of *Cambridge, Ont.*  
Andrew & Joanne - Cassidy & Tianna of *Victoria, B.C.*  
Survived by his sister Teresa Morbrook.  
Dick will surely be missed by his family, friends and all his in-laws.

The memorial service took place July 12, '08, Rev. John Vanderstoep officiating.  
Correspondence: Ekka Dyk, 16 Crombie Street, Cambridge ON N1S 1Y4

February 23, 1915  
July 11, 2008  
On July 11, 2008

**REV. CECIL WILLIAM TUINGA**

of Edmonton passed away peacefully at the age of 93 years.  
He will be lovingly remembered and dearly missed by his wife,  
Annie of 67 years, seven children: Klass (Sylvia), Henry (Jean),  
Pearl (Homer), Don (Alice), Bill (Linda), Calvin (Ellen), Jane (Roy)  
as well as 28 living grandchildren (two deceased), 68 great-  
grandchildren (three deceased) and one great-great-grandchild.

Rev. Tuinga served the CRC churches of Williamsburg, ON, Ladner and Telkwa, BC,  
Winnipeg, MAN, and Grand Prairie/La Glace, AB. Donations can be made to Word and  
Deed Ministry Diocese of Edmonton Cursillo Synod Office, 10035-103rd Street, Edmon-  
ton AB T5J 0X5 or Emmanuel Home, 13425-57th Street NW, Edmonton AB T5A 2G1.

**JEAN JOUSTRA - nee Jeltje Oppewal**  
Psalm 73:23-26 *"I am always with you..."*

Beloved mother and beppe passed away peacefully, after a short term with cancer  
at the Janet MacDonald Pavilion on Friday  
June 27, 2008 in her 91st year.  
Predeceased by her husband James, Yme (1993)

Sadly missed by children and grandchildren  
Gladys & Hank Wikkerink of *Duncan BC*  
Nicole & Kevin Tolsma  
Matthew & Maria Wikkerink  
Karen Wikkerink  
Jack & Joanne Jousstra of *Brampton ON*  
Renate & Paul van Leeuwen  
Monique Jousstra  
Marcel & Sue Jousstra  
Teake & Rita Jousstra of *Monkland ON*  
Barbara Jousstra  
Debbie & Rob Dillabough  
Kevin & Julie Jousstra  
Jeffrey & Cindy Jousstra  
Grace & Frank Pool of *London ON*  
Herman Jousstra of *Cornwall ON*  
and 15 great-grandchildren.

Friends and family attended the funeral ser-  
vice on Wednesday, July 2nd at 10:30 a.m. at  
the Immanuel Christian Reformed Church of  
Cornwall. Pastor Herb Vanderbeek officiated

Correspondence to the Family Jousstra  
at 1105 Brock St. Cornwall ON K6H 6G3



## Classifieds /Job Opportunities

## Personal

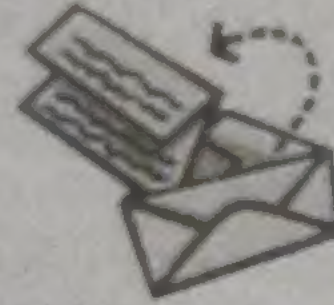
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**Rob vanSpronsen, Principal**

(403) 634-8401

[Rob.vanSpronsen@gmail.com](mailto:Rob.vanSpronsen@gmail.com)

Immanuel Christian High School  
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Lethbridge AB T1H 0S1

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([emazereeuw@gmail.com](mailto:emazereeuw@gmail.com) or 519-827-1753)

More details following issues.



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An information package is available upon request. Information about RCHS is presented at [www.rchs.on.ca](http://www.rchs.on.ca). Interested applicants may send their résumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to [mmudde@primus.ca](mailto:mmudde@primus.ca).

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Bethel Christian Reformed Church has served as the only Reformed church presence in the Saskatoon area for more than 50 years. Currently, the congregation is excited about the new building project which will much better accommodate the needs we have. The building is on the North end of Saskatoon just off a major highway with plenty of space to grow. Our congregation is diverse in Reformed backgrounds, age groups and careers and we pray for God's continued blessing also at our new location as we work together to be His light to the world.

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Director of Operations

Elim Christian Care Society

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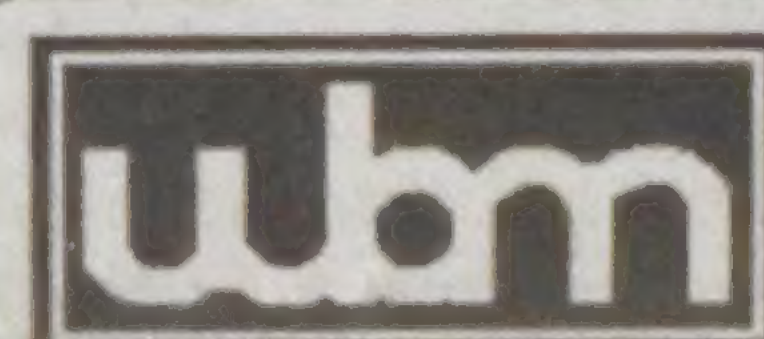
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## Events/Advertising

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

- Aug 17** Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.
- Sep 23** Organ recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (ARCCO) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at St. Paul's Cathedral, **London**, 12 noon. (wvan08@rogers.com)
- Sep 27** 2008 Worldview Conference at Kings Christian Collegiate, 528 Burnhamthorpe Rd, **Oakville**, Ont. Info and registration at [www.icscanada.edu/events](http://www.icscanada.edu/events). See. ad.
- Oct 4** Get Connected partnership Banquet hosted by CRC campus ministries, Uni. of Guelph & Uni. of Waterloo/Laurier. Banquet 6:30 -9:00 at the Drayton CRC. Contact: Eve Mazereeuw emazereeuw@gmail.com or 519-827-1753 Ad to follow in upcoming issues.
- Nov 6** Organ recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (ARCCO) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at Trinity Anglican Church, **Cambridge**, 12:15 p.m. (wvan08@rogers.com)
- Nov 8** Trillium League Reunion (Ontario) If you were involved in Trillium League Youth during the years of 1975 and 1982, you are invited to reminisce & reconnect on Saturday, November 8 from 4-9 pm at Community Christian Reformed Church in **Kitchener**. Be sure to inform any former trillium leaguers. For details go to [www.trilliumleagueunion.com](http://www.trilliumleagueunion.com) or email Phia (Hoogendoorn) Howes at [phia@sympatico.ca](mailto:phia@sympatico.ca) or call 519-699-5942

## Institute for Christian Studies

## UPCOMING EVENTS



1967 - 2007

2008 Worldview Conference  
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- 2 **Will Our Church Have Children?**  
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## News

# Why women now lead the dissident fight in Cuba

Matthew Clark  
and Sara Miller Llana

Campo de Florido, Cuba — In the past year, Nereida Rodriguez Rivero says she has been punched in the mouth, almost thrown from a moving bus, and stabbed on the street in her otherwise sleepy rural hometown.

In May, government agents took all the books out of the independent library that she continues to restock and run out of her humble home.

But — as is often the case in Cuba — the punishment for her dissent isn't limited to her alone.

Her feisty daughter Yuricel Perez Rodriguez was summarily fired from her position at a state-run children's library last year. "They said I wasn't safe for children, because I took books to [political] prisoners," says Ms. Rodriguez.

But this mother-daughter duo won't be backing down.

"If you show fear, they will eat you," says Ms. Rivero, a regional head of the Latin American Federation of Rural Women (FLAMUR), a Cuban group dedicated to pushing for political rights. "They won't swallow me whole."

Most experts agree that Raúl Castro is already cautiously moving toward a freer economy. But few expect to see any significant changes in Cuba's totalitarian political system in the near future.

Only a handful of dissidents, such as Rivero, are willing to take on the risk of fighting for basic freedoms. While these spirited few — many of whom are now women — don't wield much clout, they insist that more people are quietly asking them how to get involved.



Raúl Castro

"People are showing up asking us to help them more and more," says FLAMUR's country director, Belinda Salas Tapanes. "They come to us for networking. We don't have much more than that to help them."

Indeed, dissidents such as the women involved in FLAMUR — who last year collected more than 10,000 signatures demanding that the Cuban peso be the only unit of currency, thereby eliminating the present two-currency system — have few resources. Lacking the right to organize freely, they surreptitiously meet in crumbling apartments and speak quickly on tapped phone lines.

"At this point civil society is very weak," says Pedro Freyre, a Miami-based Cuban-American attorney and expert on embargo law. "The population's expectations have been beaten down so much that there's no spirit of rebellion. No one wants to be shot."

## Raúl's 'gerontocracy'

Raúl's first move as official leader of Cuba in February was to surround himself with a core group of well-known hardliners that critics call a "gerontocracy." At the top of the list is staunch party ideologue José Ramon Machado Ventura, who Raúl named first vice president.

"It speaks volumes that Raúl's second-in-command is older than he is," says Mr. Freyre. "They're just rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic."

"Cuba doesn't have any short- or long-term plan for democracy," says Dan Erikson, a Cuba expert with the Inter-American Dialogue in Washington, pointing out that suppression of civil liberties is still written into Cuban law.

But, despite the historic apathy fueled by the fear of imprisonment or worse, the passing of the mantle from Fidel to Raúl has stirred people's expectations — and created anxiety within the highest ranks.

Although few expect a popular uprising akin to that of the Chinese demonstrators who were famously gunned down for protesting political repression in Beijing in 1989, the Cuban government is cautious. "Raúl recognizes he's in uncharted waters," says Mr. Erikson. "He's moving with extraordinary care and keeping close tabs on dissidents."

## 'Economic apartheid'

One of the issues that Cubans complain most about is the country's two-currency policy, which Ms. Tapanes, Rivero, and fellow advocates call "economic apartheid."

Cubans get paid in pesos. But tourists, state-owned hotels, and other services that cater to foreigners use "convertible pesos," or CUC, which are worth 25 times as much as pesos. Most consumer items, be-

yond basic food and clothing, must be purchased with CUCs. But most Cubans cannot afford such purchases because government salaries are paid in regular pesos.

"The only people that can do anything are the ones who get [US dollar] remittances from family in the states — or prostitutes [paid by tourists]." People are so desperate, she says, that even "regular" married couples now agree that the wives — and the husbands — will sell themselves to cash in on Cuba's booming sex tourism trade.

Last month, several FLAMUR women were arrested for attempting to pay in pesos at a tourist restaurant, where only CUCs are accepted, as a form of protest. Last week, they tried the same thing at a pharmacy.

It was campaigning for a single currency that got Rivero punched in the mouth last August, she says. She was handing out T-shirts with the slogan: "Con la misma moneda," meaning "with the same money." This prompted three men, who she says were government-paid thugs, to attack her on a city bus and attempt to throw her out into traffic. She lost two back teeth, she says, opening wide to show the gaps.

## Why one woman fights

Twenty women work for FLAMUR in Havana, communicating openly by phone despite government surveillance. Norvis Ortero Suarez, who lives in a tiny apartment with her two cats, Luna and Mami, is one of them.

"We're always under surveillance," says Ms. Suarez calmly,



Rivero and her daughter

explaining that she works with other women to bring political prisoners food, medicine, books, and moral support. But, at times, she becomes the prisoner. "Sometimes they'll lock me up for a day or so."

But few of Cuba's political prisoners are women.

"The government has shown a real reluctance to lock women up for long periods of time," says Erikson. Why? "It could be two things: 1) The government is afraid of aggravating international opinion or 2) women are seen as less of a threat to the system."

"I'm very worried about getting locked up," says Suarez. "But I try not to think about it, otherwise nothing will change."

## 'Ladies in White'

On the other side of Havana, Laura Pollán's phone never stops ringing. In hushed tones, she talks with colleagues about recent arrests of other dissidents or events planned for that week. She never knows who is listening. Every conversation ends with the admonition, "Be careful."

She is a leader of the "Damas de Blanco" or "Ladies in White," a group of relatives — mostly wives, mothers, and sisters — of dissidents who were jailed in a sweep of arrests five years ago in what has since been dubbed "Black Spring."

Pollán's husband, Héctor Masada, a journalist, was arrested with 74 others in March 2003 for "acting against the integrity and sovereignty of the state." Among other things, he had spent the previous decades organizing newspaper

clippings by subject: environment, economics, politics, social issues, and circled the contradictions in public discourse.

"In the 50s, they [Cuba's current top officials] were revolutionaries; now they are counterrevolutionaries," says Pollán. Her husband, and other dissidents — who are so often dubbed the right-wing puppets of the US — are the real revolutionaries today, she says. "They are the ones who want to change the system."

Police briefly arrested her in April after they broke up a peaceful protest in Havana, and since then state security agents have installed a security camera and floodlights in front of her home, which is also the main office for the Ladies in White.

## Digging deep for faith in change

Rivero and other dissidents say it's hard to envision a Castro-led regime rolling back political restrictions, given the repression they've experienced. But they say that they wouldn't be battling the system if change wasn't possible.

"Raúl's Cuba is already very different than Fidel's," says Tapanes. "I think change is already happening and Raúl is implementing China-style reforms. But I'm not happy with that. The change has to be radical."

Raúl's recent economic reforms are "not change," insists Suarez. "But I have faith that there will be change. That's why I'm fighting."

Matthew Clark and Sara Miller Llana are staff writers of The Christian Science Monitor